Concise Teachings of Christianity for Orthodox Families and Schools

By
Gregorius Bulus Behnam

Translation and Introduction by
Matti Moosa

Beth Antioch press

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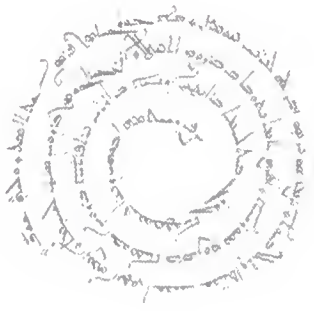

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By

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"What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us."

(2 Timothy 1:13–14)

Dedicated to His Holiness, my lord, the eminent dignitary and blessed Mor Ignatius Aphram I Barsoum, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East

I place in your hand, O great father of the Church and its strong pillar, this small violet, picked from the garden whose flowers you have watered by the brooks of your pleasant teachings, and whose fowls you fed with the bread of life. I beseech you to accept it as being scented by the fragrance of a heart that I have consecrated since my youth to the service of our Holy Church, and intended to reveal its established truth. Bestow on me your apostolic blessing and grant me your precious pontifical consent.

Your obedient son,

The monk Bulus Behnam

Mosul, July 15, 1946

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Translator's Introduction

Bishop Mor Gregorius Bulus Behnam, a luminary of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the twentieth century, was born in the village of Qaraqosh, north of Mosul, Iraq, in 1914, and was given the name of Sarkis (Sergius) at his baptism. He entered the seminary at St. Matthew's Monastery on October 26, 1926, and changed his name into Bulus. On August 15, 1935, Bulus and three of his classmates were ordained novice-monks by Metropolitans Mor Dionysius VI, assisted by Mor Athanasius Tuma (Thomas) Qasir of Mosul. This is the first time my eyes were set on this young novice monk. I was then eleven years old, when my father took me to St. Matthew's Monastery to attend the ceremony of the ordination of these monks. I still remember Bulus Behnam and the other novices before the altar, prostrating continuously while signing the cross until the time of their ordination. The ceremony was solemn, attended by a group of Syrian dignitaries from Mosul and the surrounding villages. I was then too young to converse with these novices. Later, however, I knew them all personally, especially Bulus, with whom I established a strong friendship.

In 1938, young Bulus Behnam attended the new seminary founded by Patriarch Mor Aphram 1 Barsoum (d. 1957), in Zahle, Lebanon, with a few other monks. In addition to being a student, he was entrusted with the teaching of the Syriac language at the seminary until 1945. In this year, and for merely financial reasons, Patriarch Barsoum transferred the seminary (now called St. Ephraim Seminary) to Mosul and the monk Rev. Bulus Behnam was appointed as its principal. The seminary occupied spacious wing of the Church of al-Tahira (Virgin Mary), where Rev. Behnam lived with the seminarians. It was then that I established a firm bond of friendship with him. I was a student at the Law School of Baghdad and would begin my fourth and last year in 1946. Whenever I had the opportunity, I visited Rev. Behnam and the

of whom were from Mosul. Teachers from Mosul, including my father, contributed their time to teach uncompensated at the seminary, and the seminary flourish indeed. At this time, and until I left Mosul in 1950, I realized that Rev. Bulus Behnam was a genuine learned man. He was a consummate Syriac and Arabic scholar with a profound knowledge of the literature and history of these languages. His broad knowledge of Christianity and the history of the Syrian Church and its fathers was superb. He was also a creative writer, poet, and powerful orator. He was full of life, energy, and determination to serve his Church. In 1946, another young monk, the Rev. Abd al-Ahad Tuma (later Patriarch Jacob III), hailed from India where he had served the Syrian community of Malabar for thirteen years. He and Rev. Bulus Behnam formed a powerful and highly effective learned team. With their writings and illuminating sermons, they reestablished the position of the Syrian Church, which has been lost for generations because of Ottoman rule and the ignorance that dominated the people under that rule. These two dignitaries were truly the torch which dispelled the state of darkness of the Syrian Orthodox Church.

One of Rev. Bulus Behnam's ambitions was to establish a magazine to publicize Syriac culture and history. In April of 1946, he traveled to Baghdad to buy the necessary paper for the magazine. On June 1 of the same year, the first issue of the bi-monthly magazine *al-Mashriq* appeared. Shortly afterwards, and for adverse circumstances, it was suspended and Rev. Bulus substituted it with *Lisan al-Mashriq*, which survived until 1952. Both of them tackled substantial subjects of Syriac literature, language, and philosophy. Rev. Bulus Behnam was the major writer of Syriac subjects, which demonstrated his profound knowledge of the legacy of his Church. He was avidly fond of Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286), considered in both East and West the greatest contributor to Syriac culture. No doubt, Rev. Bulus devoted much of his efforts to studying and translating some of the writings of this phenomenal erudite.

In 1952, Rev. Bulus Behnam was ordained a bishop for the cities of Baghdad and Basra. He assumed the name of Gregorius at his ordination, as an expression of admiration for Bar Hebraeus, who was also called Gregorius. His new position did not prevent him from continuing his writings or research, but it slowed him down. Still he was vibrant and prolific. From 1952 to 1969, the year of his lamentable death, he penned many books, articles, and trans-

lations. His literary output deserves a space larger than this short introduction. Interested readers in his writings should consult his life story by the late priest Rev. Yusuf Said, entitled *Hayat al-Malphan Mar Gregorius Bulus Behnam*, (Abgar Press: Beirut, 1969), pp. 73–88, and the comprehensive table of these writings by Suhayl Qasha in Behnam's book *Ahiqar al-Hakim* (Ahiqar the Sage), (Baghdad: al-Sha'b Press, 1976), pp. 8-17.

Early in 1946, Rev. Bulus Behnam, still then a monk, finished the writing of this monograph, which is the subject of this Introduction. It is a kind of catechism, but it is not set in the form of questions and answers. Each chapter is followed by summing up points. He gave it the rather florid title of *Al-Banafsaja al-Dhakiyya fi Khulasat al-Ta'alim al-Masihiyya li al-'A'ilat wa al-Madaris al-Orthodoxiyya* (The Fragrant Violet: Concise Christian Teachings for the Use of the Orthodox Families and Schools), (Mosul: Matba'at Mahfouz, 1946). He gives his name as Rev. Bulus Behnam the Syrian Orthodox, Principal of St. Ephraim Seminary in Mosul.

Rev. Behnam makes it clear that the purpose of writing this book is to meet the need of the Syrian Orthodox families and school for instructions on their Christian faith and its principle as held by their Church. He was right: up until the writing this book, the Syrian Orthodox community in Mosul had no similar text to teach them their faith. Hence, this book was, and still is, of great benefit for both families and schools.

Despite its short length, the book contains a mine of knowledge of the basic principles of the Christian faith based on the Holy Scriptures, by which he supports his statements. This shows that the Syrian Church considers the Holy Bible its sole authority for salvation. Traditions are accepted and revered by this Church, which uses them as an illustration of the faith. Indeed, reading this small book, one concludes that Jesus Christ alone is the central object of the Bible, and that there is no salvation without him. In brief, the book contains the major institutes of the Christian faith held by the Syrian Church.

The reader will notice that the majority of the institutes of the Christian faith discussed by the author are maintained by other traditional Churches. Of these traditions, we may mentions the Seven Sacraments, Confession, Holy Orders (Priesthood), Holy Unction, the signing of the Cross, and the Trisagion. In the case of the Trisagion, the Syrian Church adds the phrase "You who was cruci-

fied for us, have mercy upon us," addressed to the second person of the Trinity (Christ), a phrase not used by the Roman Catholic Church. Also, the Syrian Church rejects the celibacy of the parish priests and insists that they be married before their ordination. There are other differences with the Roman Catholic and Byzantine Churches which the author did not treat, most likely because he considered them of no real consequence.

Author's Foreword

Lord, we offer you thanks for sending us your beloved Son, who taught us the way of the truth and the life. And you have poured upon us your Holy Spirit, who guided us into the realm of light, and offered us the water of life to quench the thirst of our hearts. You have fed us with the bred of eternal life and satisfied the hunger of our souls. I beseech you, Lord, to strengthen our steps in order to reveal the truth of your Holy Church. Illumine our minds and souls to understand the teaching of your only Son. To proceed:

This is a "small violet," which I present to you, my dear Orthodox believer. I picked it the day before from the garden of a heart which I devoted since my youth to the service of our Orthodox Church, and made it a trumpet to sound publicly its pure teachings. May it be to you a precious treasure stored in its proper place?

When I realized that there is a dire need to present briefly the teachings of the Church of God, I set out to write this small book as a fulfillment of the promise I took upon myself toward our Mother Orthodox Church. I am presenting it to any zealous Orthodox who loves the teachings of Christ and desires to understand the doctrines of his Apostolic Church, especially young men and women, who are in a dire need to know these doctrines. In presenting them, I have tried meticulously to follow a simple and clear course. The result was this book, which should be of utmost benefit to the schools and churches. I have also tried to present copious verses from the Scriptures, which I deem necessary for students. For each lesson, I set up a base from the Holy Bible and made it central evidence. Then, I concluded each lesson with summaries I deemed worthwhile for students and beginners who study the doctrines of the Church.

What is worth mentioning is that these lessons lead us to understand the truth of the divine precepts and sacraments of Christi-

anity, such as the mysteries of the Trinity, the Unity of the Godhead, the Incarnation and Redemption.

These lessons have two objectives: the first is to cultivate the minds, and the second is to prompt man to conform his life and behavior to the ordinances of Christianity, without which he cannot have redemption. Indeed, his deeds may lead him to spiritual ignorance and, consequently, to lack of knowledge and error.

We have derived these Christian lessons from the Holy Bible, both Old and New Testaments. They are especially based on the New Testament, which was given us by our Lord Jesus Christ, and which we learn through the instructions of the Holy Orthodox Church and its apostolic traditions and its *malphone* (teachers). They are like a brook of life which springs from the fountain of the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Peter urged us to study the principles and doctrines of religion in order to answer anyone who asks about the reason for our faith. He said, "But in your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." (1 Peter 3:15.) Thus, these teachings should be inculcated to children from childhood, as St. Ignatius the Fiery One said in one of his letters, "From childhood, children should learn the mysteries of Christianity, in order that they would be firmly established in their minds."

These, then, are the objectives we seek from this book. We anticipate nothing but God's consent and to serve His Holy Church. He is our guide and helper.

Book One:
The True Nature of Christianity

Chapter 1: Revelation and Prophecy

> "For the prophecy came not in old times by the will of man; but holy men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."
>
> (2 Peter 1:21)

Revelation is God's divulgence to mankind of certain matters that are obscure or mysterious, such as his revelation about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ hundreds of years before his advent. Revelation is a necessity, because it teaches us multiple truths which we cannot comprehend by the light of the natural mind. However, we may be guided by the light of our natural mind to the knowledge of God and present evidence to prove it. But revelation increases our knowledge many folds, as the Apostle Paul said, "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has showed it unto them." (Romans 1:19)

God condescended to reveal these truths through revelation with the present condition of man. People may be able to comprehend them easily by faith and without falling into error.

As to prophecy, it is the knowledge of things to come and offering an account of it with certainty, such as the prophets' foretelling of the coming of the Lord Jesus, and the Lord's predicting the destruction of Jerusalem before such destruction happened. Therefore, the prophecy cannot take place without the will of God who inculcates it to his holy men, as the Apostle Peter said in 2 Peter 1:21.

We may distinguish the true revelation from the false one by the fact that true revelation tells about specific, voluntary, and futuristic matters. The false prophecy is abstruse and deals with recent, popular, and urgent matters.

Summary

1. Revelation is God's disclosure to mankind of obscure or hidden matters.

2. Revelation is necessary to teach us truths incomprehensible to us by the light of our natural mind.
3. We may comprehend the existence of God by the light of the natural mind, but revelation increases this knowledge.
4. The true revelation conforms to the sound mind and the established Christian truth.
5. Prophecy is the knowledge of voluntary future things and inculcating them with avid certainty.
6. God bestows the prophecy to his holy men.
7. True prophecy is usually evident, foretelling specific, remote, and voluntary matters. False prophecy pivots around recent, popular, and urgent matters.

Chapter 2: The Truth of the Christian Religion

> "For in the gospel, a righteousness of God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, "the righteous will live by faith."
>
> (Romans 1:17 and Habakkuk 2:4)

The Christian religion is true and divine, because its founder, our Lord and God Jesus Christ, established it by his words, deeds, and miracles. He himself testified to be the Son of God. He was sent for our salvation and to guide us to the path of truth, goodness, and righteousness. Past generations testify that he is the Son of God as foretold by the prophets, and this what later generations believed after his advent.

The testimonies of past generations made through the prophecies are plentiful. They determine that the entire circumstances of our Lord's life on Earth are in agreement with what they said. As to his testimonies about himself, they were pronounced before his disciples and friends, as written in John 3:13–18 and Matthew 11:5 and 16:1. They were also spoken before all the people, as it is written in John 5:19–23; 7:16, and 10:25. All of his testimonies are true and worthy of consideration. In fact, even his own enemies admitted his eminence and his divinity, as did the generations which came after him. The first to testify to his eminence and divinity were his disciples, who heard his teaching and witnessed his actions. It is important to know that they were Jews. Now, if they were not sure of the veracity of his teaching, they would have not forsaken everything and followed him and spread his message throughout the world. And when they died, they actually died as martyrs for his sake. Indeed, the testimony of the disciples about their master is worthy of being authentic and deserves consideration. The reason is that they witnessed and heard from him directly.

The Apostle John says, "We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life." (1 John 5:20.) John concluded his Gospel saying, "This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true." (John 21:24).

SUMMARY

The testimonies of the disciples are worthy of consideration for the following reasons:

1. They are based on the objective of the Gospel. The Gospel is actually written to testify that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who was sent to save mankind. The evangelist John said, "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31).
2. They are derived from the actions of the Apostles. They testified before the Jews, gentiles, kings, great men, learned men, and in the greatest cities of the world.
3. They are based on the holiness of their career, which absolves them from falsehood and deceit.
4. Like their master, the Apostles sustained their message with miracles.
5. The Apostles ended their work and acts of wonder by shedding their own blood in order to confirm the message of their divine master. For these and other reasons, we may be sure that the Christian religion is true. It is sufficient for salvation by the righteousness of God, as the Apostle Paul said, "For in the gospel, a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'" (Romans 1:17 and Habakkuk 2:4).

Chapter 3: The New Testament

> "Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him."
>
> (Romans 16:25–26)

The New Testament consists of the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the Acts; the Letters of Sts. Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude; and Revelation.

The Christian will find in these Books everything necessary for salvation through Jesus Christ, who taught his disciples and commanded them to write down his covenant and deliver it to those who might believe by their evangelization.

In the four Gospels, we find the chronicles of the Lord Jesus from his birth, his teachings, and his deeds, until his passion, which he suffered for our sake. These Books also contain the chronicles of his death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven. All of these things he did for our salvation.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we find the heroism the Apostles demonstrated in their preaching of the Gospel. They also contain the anxieties which the first Church endured from the Jews and the Gentiles, specifically, the heroism of St. Paul, and his preaching and travels. In the Letters, we find the true instructions the Apostles inculcated to the Church in order to walk in their light and guidance.

The New Testament reveals to us many things which were hidden from us since eternity. The most important thing is the knowledge of the eternal Word of God according to St. Paul, who said, "Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and

the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him." (Romans 16:25–26). We shall only study the Gospels and their teachings.

SUMMARY

1. The New Testament contains the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; Acts; the Letters of Sts. Paul, Peter, James, John, Jude; and Revelation.
2. These Books contain everything that the Christian needs for salvation.
3. We find in the Gospels the chronicles of the life of our Savior Jesus Christ, his miracles, deeds, words. and divine teachings.
4. The Acts of the Apostles contains the deeds of the Apostles in the early period of the Church, their persecution by the Jews and Gentiles, the expansion of the Church, and specifically, the chronicles of St. Paul.
5. The Letters contain the true teachings which the Apostles delivered to the Christian Church to guide it to the light of salvation.

Chapter 4: The Gospel

> "It has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immorality to light through the gospel. And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher."
>
> (2 Timothy 1:10–11.) *And for this gospel he was appointed a herald, an apostle, and a teacher.*

Christ has brought light to life and granted immortality through the Gospel, as we have learned from St. Paul and the four Gospels. Let us study each one of them.

1. The Gospel of Matthew was written by Matthew the evangelist in Hebrew around the years 43 or perhaps 39 A.D. It was written for the converted Jews to Christianity. In this gospel, the author established that Jesus is the awaited Christ, because he was the Son of David in whom the prophecies were fulfilled. Matthew related his events in an organized manner according to the dates of their occurrence. However, he related the events according to their similarity with each other and presented copious testimonies from the Old Testament. His Gospel also contains the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6, and 7), considered the constitution of the Christian Church. He also recorded the genealogy of Christ from Abraham to Joseph, to whom the Virgin was betrothed.

2. The Gospel of Mark. St. Mark, one of the evangelists, wrote this gospel in Greek around the year 50 A.D., by the instruction of St. Peter the Apostle. In it, he displays the greatness of Christ through his deeds and astonishing miracles. Scholars maintain that Peter had a strong connection with this gospel by comparing Mark 8:27–33 with Matthew 16:13–23. In Mark, we see that Jesus commending Peter (for declaring that he is the Son of the living God) is deleted, while his censure of Peter is preserved because of Peter's

repentance. Also, Mark 14:72 mentions the crowing of the cock twice, while Matthew 26:74 say that the cock crowed only once.

3. The Gospel of Luke. St. Luke, one of the evangelists, wrote his gospel in Greek in the year 58 A.D., by the direction of St. Paul. We learn this from 2 Timothy 2:8, in which St. Paul says, "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel."

This gospel is distinguished by including things not found in the other gospels, especially the genealogy of Christ according to the flesh, beginning with Joseph who was betrothed to the Virgin until Adam. It also contains the Nativity of Christ; his Presentation in the Temple; the commission of the seventy evangelists; and the parables of the Samaritan, the fruitless fig tree, the prodigal son, the lost sheep, the unjust steward, and the rich man and Lazarus.

4. The Gospel of John. This gospel was written in Greek by the Apostle John, the beloved and divine, between the years 96 and 98 A.D. It is the last gospel. The reason of writing it is to prove the divinity of Christ. Thus it begins with, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1). It did not mention most of the things related in the other gospels. But it included specific matters, such as the sermons which Christ delivered at Passover and the Festivity of the Tabernacles.

SUMMARY

1. The Gospel of St. Matthew was written in the year 43 or perhaps 39, in the Hebrew language, which is the Syriac (Aramaic) language of Palestine for the converted Jews. It establishes that Jesus is the anticipated Christ. Of its most important contents is the Sermon on the Mount and the genealogy of Christ through Adam to Joseph.
2. The Gospel of Mark was written in Greek by Mark, one of the seventy evangelists, by the instruction of the Apostle Peter.
3. The Gospel of Luke as written in Greek by Luke, the evangelist, around the year 58 A.D., by the instruction of St. Paul. It contains the genealogy of Christ from Joseph until Adam, and many other things not mentioned in the other Gospels.

4. The Gospel of John was written in Greek by John between 96 and 99 A.D. Its main purpose is to establish that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, Son of God, in refutation of heresies. It opens its narrative with sublime words. It contains many things not mentioned in the other Gospels. John determined to organize events according to the times of their occurrence.

Chapter 5: The Veracity of the Gospels

> "Hold fast the form of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."
>
> (2 Timothy 1:13)

The Four Gospels we have today are true and authentic. They are exactly the ones which were delivered unto us by the holy Apostles as an established testimony of the veracity of the teaching of their Divine Master, and about hidden matters which were not made manifest except through them. This is asserted by St. Paul who said, "But is now made manifest by the appearance of our Savior Jesus Christ, who abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Whereupon I am appointed a preacher and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles." (2 Timothy, 1:11) In verse 13, he urges us "to hold fast the form of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

We have also many historical evidences from the second and the third centuries proving that these Gospels are written by their known authors. Most important of these evidences are the following:

1. In the first century, the letter addressed by St. Clement, bishop of Rome, to the Corinthians. It contains six verses taken from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. (See the First Letter, p. 46, no. 58). There is also the Letter of Barnabas which contains some verses from the Gospel of Matthew (The Letter of Barnabas 5:9), and the Letter of the holy St. Ignatius the Fiery One, Patriarch of Antioch, in which he mentions verses from the Gospels of Matthew and John, and his Letter to the Philippians 7:21.

2. From the second century, we have many testimonies, such as the Defense of Justin, Martyr of the Christian religion, which

contains twenty verses from the Gospel of Matthew (p.5). In his book *Contra Heresies*, St. Ireneus mentioned the four evangelists. Also, Tertullian mentioned them in his first and fourth refutations of Marcion, stating the circumstance in which they were written. The most important testimony, however, comes from Origen, based on the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius (Book Six, Chapter 25) who said, "The first gospel was written by Matthew, who became an Apostle of Jesus Christ. The second gospel was written by Mark, who wrote down what was related by St. Peter. The third gospel was written by Luke for the Gentiles by the command of St. Paul. And the fourth gospel and the last was written by John. Furthermore, Jewish learned men and heathen philosophers mentioned these gospels. In fact, they twisted them in order to fight the Church, but in the end they did a good service to it without knowing what they were doing."

SUMMARY

1. The known four Gospels are true and authentic, and are the same which were delivered to us by the Apostles.
2. This is testified by St. Paul, who said, "Hold fast the form of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 1:13)
3. Learned men and scholars of the first and second centuries, testify to the veracity of these Gospels, most important of which are the verses they related in order to guide the believers. They defended the truth by their writings and refuted the pagan philosophers.
4. The testimonies of the Jews and pagan philosophers.

Book Two:
God, Angels, and Man

Chapter 1: The Existence of God

> "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."
>
> (Romans 1:20)

The existence of God is self-evident, which every rational person can comprehend by the light of the natural reason. Created things, their organization, order, and magnificence, bear an obvious witness of the existence of God. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handy works." (Psalm 19:1). Now, if the human mind contemplates meticulously the created beings, it will necessarily conclude that they have a great creator, and that creator is God.

The Holy Bible is a sufficient proof of the existence of God. It also tells us to use as evidence the tangible natural matters in order to believe that God does exist. Job said, "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach you; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell you. Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach you, and the fish of the sea shall declare unto you. Who knows not in all these things that the hand of the Lord has wrought this?" (Job 12:7). The Apostle Paul said, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:20).

In this context, the fathers of the Church have also made significant comments. John Chrysostom said, "Has he sent them a voice? No. He did what is stronger than any voice to attract them, by placing before them the entire world which he created. Thus, it is within the ability of the sage, the ignorant, and the barbarian, to exceed beyond mere witnessing the beauty of the visible created beings to the knowledge of God and believing in him." St. Augustine said, "Because they themselves saw what man could see, they actually saw the creator through the creation, the maker through

things made, and the originator of the world through the existing world."

In essence, man has within him a natural propensity to believe in the existence of God. In fact, there is no generation where man did not believe in a god, and that the earth had a creator. From the beginning until the present, nations worshiped a god, a fact which tells us that, by nature, man is destined to believe the existence of God.

SUMMARY

The reasoning of the existence of God is self-evident. It can be proved by three methods:

1. The contemplation of the created beings which must have a creator, and this creator is Almighty God.
2. The Holy Bible is found in order to guide man to the existence of God and to worship him.
3. The fathers of the Church and its learned men have made significant comments confirming the existence of God. They refer man to nature and created beings, to contemplate them and then discover that God is their creator.
4. The general accepted concept is that since man began and until the present, he always worshipped a god regardless of what he is. This alone proves that there is something in man's nature which drives him to believe in God.

Chapter 2: The Attributes of God

> "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out!"
>
> (Romans 11:33)

The most specific attributes of God is that he is a spirit, simple, eternal, absolutely perfect, self-existing, and he is the cause of all creation. Thus, the attributes of God are many and they are sublime, perfect, and unlimited. What are meant by attributes are the characteristics of God's essence and their perfection. The fathers of the Church divided God's attributes to essential and relative.

The essential attributes of God are those which exist within his nature from eternity. They are everlasting and are without beginning or end, because God has no beginning or end. He is ever living, unlimited, almighty, and omnipresent.

The relative attributes are those which man ascribes to God, such as he is knowing, wise, mighty, holy, just, loving, and merciful. We shall study God's attributes in the following chapter, while realizing that we cannot trace all of them. "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out!" (Romans 11:33)

Summary

1. The attributes of God are many. They are sublime and unlimited concerning his person.
2. The attributes of God are essential and relative.
3. The essential attributes are those which exist within the nature of God from eternity.
4. The relative attributes are those ascribed to him by man.

Chapter 3: The Most Specific Attributes of God.

> "God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."
>
> (John 4:24)

We have said that the attributes of God are too many and cannot be counted. Here we shall study the most specific attributes of God, that is he is spirit, simple, eternal, absolutely perfect, self-existing, and the cause of all created things.

1. God is spirit. This means that God exists in a spiritual form which cannot be changed. Christ himself testified that "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24).

2. God is simple. This means that he is a composite of different parts like us human beings. His simplicity is based on his spirituality. The Holy Bible ascribes to God many attributes which remove from him any natural composition, such as his eternity and perpetuity.

3. God is eternal. This means that he exists eternally in his own self, and that he has no beginning. The Prophet David said, "Before the mountains were brought forth or ever you had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God." (Psalm 90:2).

4. God is of absolute perfection. This means that God suffers no deficiency. He is perfect in himself, nature, power and glory. We cannot imagine how deficiency can occur to the creating entity of God. The Lord Jesus said, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48). The Apostle Paul said, "But when that which perfect comes, the imperfect disappears." (1 Corinthians 13:10).

5. God's existence is absolute. It means that God exists in his own self, an attribute applied to God alone, and no being shares it with him. The Prophet Isaiah said, "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near." (Isaiah 55:6.)

6. God is the cause of all creation on this earth. All that we see is his handiwork. The Scriptures says, "You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and their entire starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them." (Nehemiah 9:6).

SUMMARY

1. God is a spirit; that is, he exists in non-corporeal state.
2. God is simple; that is; he is not composite of parts like us.
3. God is eternal; that is, he is not deficient.
4. God's existence is absolute; that is, he exists in his own entity.
5. God is the cause of all created things; that is, he generated all the creation.

Chapter 4: Trinity and Unity

> "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." (Deuteronomy 6:4). "For there are three that testify: the spirit, the water, and the blood; and the three are one."
>
> (1 John 5:7)

God is unique in being one. No one is like unto him. He has no partner in his power, eternality, divinity, or anything else connected with his attributes. The Oneness of God is an established fact in the Christian Church. It was confirmed by the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) which says, "I believe in One God" based on the testimonies of the Scriptures. The Holy Bible says, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one," (Deuteronomy 6:4) which is repeated in both Old and New Testaments, and there is no need to elaborate here. The fathers of the Church have appropriate saying in this regard. In his refutation of Marcion (Book Three), Tertullian, a second- and third-century scholar, said, "If God is not one, then he is not existent, because God cannot be but of sublime power. And he cannot be of sublime power unless there is no one equal to him. And he who has no equal cannot be but One.

The contemplation of God requires his Oneness, because it is unimaginable to see someone greater than him. He existed from eternity, and he who exists from eternity is unique (He is One).

The Christian Church maintains that this God, who is one in his essence, is of three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This truth is indicated in the Old Testament, as the Psalmist (David) says, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; their starry host by the breath of his mouth." (Psalm 33:6.) In this verse and others, Church scholars saw clear evidence of the Trinity, because it contains three: the Word, the Lord, and the Spirit. These three are expressed in the New Testament as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

In the New Testament, we find many testimonies confirming the three divine persons of the Trinity. The Lord (Jesus) commissioned his disciples by telling them, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19), and the words of St. John, "For there are three that testify: the spirit, the water, and the blood; and the three are one." (1 John 5:7).

The three persons of the Trinity are equal in the Godhead. They are of one essence, and one God. The fathers of the Church offered examples of this truth in order to make it understandable by the human mind. They likened the Trinity to the human soul and its three characteristics: reason, rationality or speech, and life. The reason is exemplified by God, the speech (Word) by the Son, and the life by the Holy Spirit.

Another example is the sun which consists of a disc, light, and heat. All of these are but one sun, and not three suns. The disc represents the Father, the light represents the Son, and the heat represents the Holy Spirit.

We may also find an evidence of these three *qnume* ("persons" in Syriac) from their own properties. The first *qnumo* ("person") is called God, because he brought forth the Son, and his property is Fatherhood. The second *qnumo* is called the Son, because he was born of the Father, and his property is Sonship. And the third *qnumo* is called the Holy Spirit, because he proceeded from the Father, and his property is the Procession. With these properties, the three persons of the Trinity are distinguished from each other. These persons were once manifested at the River Jordan when the Lord Christ was baptized. The Son was baptized by John, the Spirit descended upon him as a dove, and the Father cried out from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in who I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:16–17. Cf. Mark 1:10 and John 3:22).

SUMMARY

1. God is One and unique. Nothing is like unto him, and he has no partner in glory, power, eternality, and his entire divine attributes. This is attested by the Holy Bible and the doctors of the Church.
2. This One God is in three *qnume* ("persons"): the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is indicated and established by the Old and the New Testaments.

3. The three persons are equal in the entire divine properties, and they are one essence. The fathers of the Church presented examples to make them understandable by the human mind.
4. The first example is the human soul and its three properties: reason, rationality or speech, and life. And each one of these properties typifies one of the Persons. Reason typifies the Father, rationality or speech (word) typifies the Son, and life typifies the Holy Spirit.
5. The second example is the sun, which consists of a disc, light, and heat. The disc typifies the Father; the light typifies the Son; and the heat typifies the Holy Spirit.
6. We learn about these Persons from the Holy Bible and from their own properties. The property of the first Person is Fatherhood, because he brought forth the Son. The property of the second is Sonship, because he was born of the Father, and the property of the third is Procession, because he proceeded from the Father.
7. These Persons were manifested once at the River Jordan (Matthew 3:16–17)

Chapter 5: Angels

"Who makes his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire?"

(Psalm 104:4)

Angels are simple spirits endowed with reason and will. They were created by God righteous and holy. The term *angel* denotes more the message than nature. The term *angel* means messenger. The Savior is called in this sense by Malachi. (Malachi 3:1). In this sense also, the prophets, Apostles, and John the Baptist are also called. Angels excel human beings in perfection (Bar Hebraeus; *The Book of Rays* (Syriac, *Zalge*)).

Some deny the existence of angels. But the Holy Bible and the tradition of the fathers establish their existence. The Bible abounds with testimonies about angels. For example, Jacob dreamed and saw a ladder set up on the earth and its top reached to heaven. And he saw the angels of God ascending and descending on it. (Genesis 28:12). David said, "Who make his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire?" (Psalm 104:4). St. Augustine said, "We know by faith that angels do exist, and we should not doubt this at all." (Augustine, Commentary 1 on Psalm 13). In his *Defense of Christianity*, 1 and 6, St. Justin (Martyr) said, "We honor the holy angels greatly, who stand in the obedience of God."

The reason some doubt the existence of angels is because the Scriptures do not mention the day of their creation. The Prophet Moses indicated their creation implicitly. Some Church learned men, such as St. Ephraim and Mor Jacob of Sarug, are of the opinion that angels were created on the first day of the creation. They base their idea on the Book of Genesis, 1:1 which says that, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Bar Hebraeus, *The Book of Rays.*) Others maintain that angels were created before the heavens and the earth, based on Job 38:7 who said (according to the Syriac version of the Bible called The Pshitto (Simple)), that

"while the morning stars sang together and all the angels (or the sons of God) shouted with joy?" (Quoted by John Chrysostom, Jacob of Sarug, and Jacob of Edessa, as related by Bar Hebraeus in *The Book of Rays.*)

The mission of angels is to serve God and men. They serve God by praising and glorifying him and inculcate men with his will. They serve men by guiding them to what is good and protecting them from evil. Every believer has a particular angel called "the guardian angel." This is attested by the Lord who said, "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:10).

Some angels with their leader rebelled against their creator and were cast down into hell. They are called devils and Satan. They are kept in everlasting chains until the Day of Judgment. The Scripture says, "And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day." (Jude 1:6).

The work of Satan from the beginning is to deceive people and harm them. The Lord Jesus said, "He [the devil] was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him." (John 8:44).

The devils are numerous and cannot be counted. But they cannot force man to do evil, except by deception.

Fathers of Church taught that the angels are of seven ranks: Cherubim, Seraphim, Thrones, Authorities, Powers, Dominions, Archangels, and Angels. (Bar Hebraeus, *Book of Rays.*)

SUMMARY

1. Angels are spirits endowed with reason and will. They were created in a state of holiness.
2. *Angel* means messenger. The Savior was called the Messenger of the Age.
3. The angels excel human beings by perfection, because they are fiery, spiritual, and remote from earthly matters.
4. Some denied the existence of angels. But the Holy Bible and the fathers' tradition establish it.
5. The angels were created at the same time the world was created. Or, they were created on the first day of the crea-

tion as the Bible says, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1).

6. The mission of the angels is to serve God by praising him, to guide people to what is good, and to protect them. Every believer has a guardian angel.
7. Some angels fell and lost their righteousness because they violated the command of their creator.
8. The mission of these fallen angels is to deceive and harm people. However, Satan cannot force man to do evil.
9. Angels are of nine ranks, according to the teaching of the Church.

Chapter 6: Man

> "God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness'...and God created man in his own image.'"
>
> (Genesis 1:26–27)

Man is a composite creature of soul and body. The soul is a fine and simple spirit. Man is endowed with reason and will. The soul is incorporeal; the body is corporeal and material created from the dust of the earth.

God created man in the state of righteousness, attested by his saying, "'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.' Thus, God created man in his own image, in his likeness he created him." (Genesis 1:26–27). God's purpose of creating man is that man would know him, love him, and enjoy his presence. And doing this, he will gain everlasting life in which God wanted him to be a partner.

God created our first parents, Adam and Eve, a male and female. The Scriptures says, "God created them male and female. He blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" (Genesis 1:27–28)

Regarding the creation of man, the Holy Bible says, "The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."(Genesis 2:7) Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." (Genesis 2:18) "So the Lord God caused man to fall into a deep sleep, and while he as sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man

said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called *woman*, for she was taken out of man.'" (Genesis 2:18-23)

And God granted man many good things when he created him and commanded him to enjoy them. The Holy Bibles says, "Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." (Genesis 2:8-9) However, God did not give man absolute freedom in the garden, but commanded him to eat from all the trees except the tree of the knowledge of god and evil. He said to man, "But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it, you will surely die." (Genesis 2:17) But man, violating the command of his creator, ate from the forbidden tree and lost the state of righteousness and holiness in which he was created. And man was driven to the earth in order to work it with the sweat of his brow. (Genesis 3:19)

Thus, the transgression of man was done, and he fell from the heights of righteousness into the state of sin and misery. God's mercy, however, promised man redemption and that he will crush the head of the serpent, which is Satan." (Genesis 3:15)

SUMMARY

1. Man is a composite creature of body and soul.
2. Soul is a spiritual substance, simple and endowed with reason and will. It is immortal.
3. The parents of mankind are Adam and Eve.
4. God created Adam from the dust of the earth and created Eve from Adam's rib.
5. God offered man many good things and made him dwell in the Garden of Eden.
6. Man lost his righteousness, holiness, and all the good things that God offered him.
7. Man forfeited all these good things, because he violated God's command and ate from the tree.
8. With man's transgression, sin dominated. But God's mercy promised him salvation.

Book Three:
The Incarnation and Redemption

Chapter 1: The Savior and His Divinity

> "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."
>
> (John 1:1)

The divinity of Christ is established by words and deeds. The words are those of the prophets, which have been exactly fulfilled in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The deeds are the teachings, actions, and miracles of the Lord himself and those of his holy Apostles. The Apostles have established to mankind his divinity and glory, and testified that, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

The most cogent testimonies proving the divinity of Jesus are:

1. The prophecies of the Old Testament which declare that the promised Savior is a true God. They assert that he was born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), from a Virgin (Isaiah 7:14), from the seed of David (Isaiah 11:1), and he is the greatest teacher (Isaiah 61:1), and will establish his words with many miracles (Isaiah 35:5–6), will save the world by passion(Isaiah 50:6 and 53:1–12), dies (Psalm 22:14), and will rise from the dead (Psalm 16:10), ascends into heaven (Psalm 109:1), and all these prophecies have been fulfilled. (See also Matthew 11:3–6; 16:13–19; 26:63–64; Mark 8:27–29; 14:61–62; Luke 7:20–23; 9:18-20; 24:26; John 4:25–26; 11:25; 14:9–10; 16:15).

2. The testimony of the Father from heaven in a loud voice, which happened twice: once when at the baptism of the Lord in the River Jordan, and the second when he was transfigured on the mount. Matthew says, "As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went out of the water. At that moment, heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well-pleased." (Matthew 3:16–17). Concerning the transfigura-

tion, he says, "While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well-pleased. Listen to him.'" (Matthew 17:5). Jesus, to him is glory, also mentioned this testimony before the Jews. He said, "And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me." (John 5:37)

3. The testimony of Jesus about himself confirms his holiness, the purity of his life, his prophecies, and his miracles, especially the miracle of his resurrection. He said, "Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from or where I am going." (John 8:14). He also said, "I have a testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me." (John 5:36).

4. The teaching of the Apostles established by their acts and testimonies about their master, whose works they had seen and whose words they had heard and testified to. "This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true." (John 21:24).

5. The miraculous expansion of the Church and its resistance, despite the impediments it faced. This fast expansion could have not come by human means. It is a palpable proof of its veracity and the truthfulness of its founder, the divine Jesus Christ.

6. The confession of the countless martyrs proves that their immaculate blood was shed for the cause of a grounded principle in their souls. This principle is the divinity of Jesus.

SUMMARY

1. The Savior is the Word God, our Lord Jesus Christ.
2. The divinity of Christ is established by many deeds and words which are:
    a. The prophecies of the Old Testament, which are exactly fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.
    b. The testimony of the Father from heaven, in a voice heard saying, "This is my beloved Son."
    c. The testimony of Christ himself, confirmed by his holy life, prophecies, and miracles, especially the miracles of his resurrection.
3. The teaching of the Apostles, confirmed by their works, miracles, martyrdom, and the shedding of their blood.

4. The confession of many martyrs.
5. The fast spread of the Church and its resistance despite many impediments.

Chapter 2: The Incarnation

> "But when the time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under law, that we may receive the full rights of sons."
>
> (Galatians 4:4)

Generations succeeded each other, and man fumbled through the wilderness of ignorance and transgression. The human soul sunk in a deep sleep, weighed down by the heavy burden of sin, thirsty for the fountain of life. But there was no hand to be stretched to remove that burden from the backs of tired men. However, the eye of God kept looking on the thirsty mankind in order to guide it to salvation. Thus, "When the time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under law, that we may receive the full rights of sons."(Galatians 4:4)

The Word of God was incarnated "By the Holy Spirit and from the Virgin Mary and was made man." (The Nicaea Creed) With this, the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled: "The virgin will be with child, and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) And thus, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

The meaning of the Incarnation of the Son of God is that the second *quumo* of the Holy Trinity came down to earth and became man like us, and took everything from us save sin. "But we have one [Christ] who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15). His birth was miraculous in every aspect. (See Matthew 1:18, and Luke 2:1)

The Incarnation was necessary so that God may offer a complete sacrifice for sin, and teach men the way of salvation, in order to redeem them by his death and restore for them the lost glory.

The reason God did this is because the creation could not offer a complete sacrifice for its sins. Indeed, sin was boundless, because it was directed against God himself. Thus, no one could offer a sacrifice for it except God alone. This caused the Son of God to be incarnated and become "The atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:2). The old law could not blot out, as the Apostle Paul said, "For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man." (Romans 8:3)

This Incarnated God is one nature out of two natures: the divine and the human. He is also one will. And by this one nature he saved us. St. Paul said, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:23-24). He also said while confirming the bishops of Ephesus in the faith, "Be shepherds of the Church of God, which he bought with his own blood." (Acts 20:28). Here the Apostle makes clear that by his blood, Christ became an offering for us. And his blood is not a human blood because this blood contains no complete offering; it is the blood of the Incarnated Son of God, and that he is one nature and nothing else. This was the belief of the Church universal before the rise of the heresy of Nestorius, and even before the Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.) which met to condemn this heresy. We have produced some comments of the fathers during this period.

St. Gregorius Thaumaturgus said regarding the faith, "He [Christ] a true God free of body but appeared with a body in his consummate divinity. He is not two persons or natures, and we do not adore a quaternary of God the Father, his Son, man, and the Holy Spirit.

In his letter to the Emperor Jovian (363–364 A.D.), St. Athanasius said, "Now we say that we should believe in one nature, one *qnuma* of the Incarnated Word of God. And who does not accept [this faith] is contending against God and the holy fathers." (See Bar Hebraeus, *Mnorath Qudshe* (Lamp of the Sanctuaries), Base Four, and by the same author, *Zalge (The Book of Rays)*, Book Three, Section Two, Chapter 4).

SUMMARY

1. Mankind continued to be lost in the wilderness of sin and thirsty for salvation, until God sent a Savior, who is the Incarnated Son of God, Jesus Christ.
2. The Son of God was incarnated by the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary. He became man, as prophesized by the Prophet Isaiah.
3. The birth of Christ was in all aspects miraculous.
4. This miraculous Incarnation was necessary to be a sacrifice for the sins of men, and to teach them to path of salvation. It was necessary because mankind was unable to achieve salvation except by a sacrifice offered by God himself.
5. The Incarnated God, Jesus Christ, is one nature and one will, as we are taught by our holy mother the Church.

Chapter 3: The Works and Teachings of the Savior

> "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."
>
> (Matthew 11:28–29)

The works of the Savior Jesus Christ were magnificent. His words were divine, and his teachings heavenly and sublime. All his words and teachings point to one goal: to save mankind from ignorance and sin. In order to prove his divinity, he exhibited miraculous deeds beyond the ability of men. He enunciated many sayings before which the greatest philosophers stand humble. All of these are done that men will accept his heavenly message and come to the path of truth and redemption. He made it clear saying, "I have told these things, so that in me you may have peace." (John 16:33). He also said, speaking to the Father, "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you have granted him authority over all people, that he might give eternal lives to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:1–4)

What we should know about our Lord Jesus Christ on earth is three things: his holiness, miracles, and divine teachings.

1. The holiness of his life proves that he was God and Son of God. In fact, history has not known a man characterized by infinite holiness like the person of our Lord Jesus of Nazareth. He even censured his antagonists and those who opposed his teachings, and challenged them openly saying, "Can anyone of you prove me guilty of sin?" (John 8:46) The Apostle Paul said, "We have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was with-

out sin." (Hebrews 4:15). Added the Apostle Peter said, "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." 1 Peter 2:22).

2. His miracles were great and unheard of. They are different from the miracles done by the prophets in that the prophets did them by the power of God and after extended prayer. Jesus, however, committed his miracles by his own divine command. His followers testified, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him." (Luke 8:25) He raised the dead with one word. He ordered Lazarus to come forth after he had been dead four days. (John 11:44). He raised the son of the widow, saying, "Young man, I say to you, get up." (Luke 7:14) He said to the daughter of the synagogue leader (Jairus), "Talitha (little girl), I say to you, get up!" (Mark 5:41) We are told by the Gospel that his opponents of the Jews marveled at all this. They were amazed and asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority. He even gives orders to the evil spirits and they obey him." (Mark 1:27) He accomplished these works that people may believe that he is God, as he said directing his prayer to the Father, "I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." (John 11:42)

3. His teachings were a divine antidote for the people who were anxious to quench their thirst for the truth and life. Jesus called unto them, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:28–30). The divine teachings of Jesus are evident in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 5:6–7. Check Book Six, Chapter 5.)

Jesus was a king, a priest, and a prophet. He was the king of Israel, as said in Mark 15:32; Matthew 2:2; and Luke 23:3. But he was not an earthly king, for he was the king of heaven and earth. He sought a kingdom which dominates the entire world, and not one of its countries, as the Pharisees the blind Jews imagined. He was king of the souls which believed in him and the hearts which obeyed him. This was the true kingdom of Jesus, as he said, "My kingdom is not of this world. (John18:36). Indeed, his kingdom was more sublime than this world.

Jesus was a distinguished priest, because he offered by his own hand a great sacrifice for the sins of the world. The sacrifice was his precious blood spilled on the cross. The Apostle Paul said, "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished." (Romans 3:25). He also said, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven." (Hebrews 1:3). He further said, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess." (Hebrews 4:14).

Jesus was a prophet and the Lord of the prophets whom he inspired. He announced many prophecies, which were fulfilled in their own time. He prophesied about his disciples' uncertainty when he was on the way to be crucified, and that all of them will fall away on his account for fear of the Jews. (Matthew 26:31). He prophesied about his denial by Peter, saying, "I tell you the truth, this very night before the cock cows, you will disown me three times." (Matthew 26:34). He prophesied that Judas will betray him saying, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me. The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me." (Matthew 26:20–22). He also prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and the calamities which will befall the Jews. (Matthew 24:1–41). All these prophecies were fulfilled in time.

SUMMARY

1. The Savior Jesus Christ committed many great works and taught divine and heavenly teachings, all of which point to one goal: the salvation of mankind.
2. The magnificent works of the Savior are exemplified in three things: the holiness of his life, his miracles, and his divine teachings, all of which are recorded in the Gospel and the letters of the apostles.
3. His life was so immaculate that he challenged his opponents saying, "Can anyone of you prove me guilty of sin?" (John 8:46). His miracles were committed by his own divine authority. He commanded everything according to what he wanted, unlike the prophets. By his true sayings

and teachings, he fed the hungry mankind, and quenched its thirst with the water of life.

4. Jesus was a king, priest, and prophet. He was a king who enthralled the hearts of men and dominated their souls. His kingdom was not from this earth but more sublime than it. He was a priest, because he offered his divine self an oblation to his Father for the sins of the world. He was a prophet, because he prophesied many things which were fulfilled in their time, according to the testimony of the Gospel and history.

Chapter 4: The Act of Redemption

> "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."
>
> (1 Peter 1:18–19)

The transgression of man had no limit, because it was directed against the infinite God. Therefore, it was necessary to blot it out by an infinite ransom. In fact, nothing in this world is forever. For this reason, God's mercy condescended in the *qnumo* (the second person of the Trinity), the Incarnated Jesus Christ to became an infinite divine ransom for peoples' transgression. Thus, the Savior Jesus Christ suffered passion in Jerusalem (which killed the prophets, and stoned those sent to her) in the time of Pontus Pilate, the prefect of Judea. He died on the cross and by his death he granted life to mankind as said by St. Ishaq (Isaac) of Antioch, in his *Discourse on the Faith*. By his death, the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled, which says, "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth." (Isaiah 53:4–7). As to the manner of Christ's death and under what condition he saved the world, and whether he died as a man or as a God, these are very delicate matters which we cannot elaborate in this short account. However, we maintain with the Universal Church that mankind received salvation by the death of

the Son of God, and redeemed not "with perishable things, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (1 Peter 1:18–19). This imperishable thing is the blood of the Incarnated God. In his *Discourse on the Faith*, St. Isaac of Antioch said, "The greatest glory of the Church is that God died on the Cross."

The death of Christ put an end to the transgression of mankind. He completed his redemptive work when he cried on the cross, "It is finished." (John 19:30). He meant that he has completed the salvation of mankind for which he came and suffered passion.

He was brought down from the cross and buried. After three days, he rose victoriously against death and hell. By his resurrection, he proved his divinity and might. It was by these two truths that the Apostles spread his case throughout the world. His soul descended into the bottomless pit and visited those who anticipating it, and gave them the good news that the Kingdom of God is at hand, and the freedom from the yoke of the devil.

After his resurrection, he remained on earth forty days with his disciples, confirming them, teaching them, and sealing his covenant with them. Then, he ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand of God the Father.

SUMMARY

1. The transgression of man is infinite, because it is directed to God himself. It required an infinite ransom, which no one could achieve, except the blood of the Incarnated God, Jesus Christ.
2. By his death on the cross in the time of Pontus Pilate, Christ saved mankind and offered for it a ransom, and fulfilled the sayings of the prophets.
3. The Universal Church maintains that mankind received salvation through the blood of the Incarnated God, Jesus Christ.
4. The death of Christ put an end to the transgression of mankind when he cried in a loud voice, "It is finished."
5. After his death, his body was placed in a grave, but his soul descended into the lower pit, and gave the good news to the righteous of their redemption and release from death. Three days later, he rose from the dead victorious. He re-

mained with his disciples forty days on earth confirming them, and then ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand of God the Father.

Chapter 5: The Benefits of Salvation

> "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."
>
> (1Corinthians 6:11)

By his death, the Savior Jesus bestowed upon us three benefits from his heavenly Father, which mankind could not have without the infinite sacrifice which Jesus offered by his precious blood, to save it from sin and ignorance. These three benefits are evident in the New Testament and are enjoyed by anyone who believes in the Lord Jesus. They are offered freely, as the Apostle Paul says, "He saved us, not because of righteous things we have done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:5–7). These benefits are three:

1. The Benefit of Justification. The Lord Jesus justified us from ancient iniquities, and by his death, granted us a free ransom for our sins, as the Apostle Paul said, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance, he left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:23–26)

2. The Benefit of Sanctification. After granting us his grace of justification, he also sanctified us by his blood. He washed away the sins of mankind and presented it to his Father a holy Church and a

holy people, as the Apostle Paul said, "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:11)

3. The Benefit of Adoption. After the Lord justified us and sanctified us by his immaculate blood, he presented us as sons to his heavenly Father. In fact, without the graces of justification and sanctification, we could not become the sons of the everlasting Father. Thus, the Lord taught us to call God our Father. He said, "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven...." (Matthew 6:9) The Apostle Paul says, "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received a spirit of Sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." (Romans 8:15–16)

Having received these precious graces through the blood of the Lord Christ, we should preserve them lest we forfeit them by improper deeds. We should preserve our spiritual Sonship of God the Father, and the sanctification and the justification granted to us by the Lord Jesus Christ.

SUMMARY

1. By his death on the cross, the Lord Jesus got for us three free benefits from his heavenly Father.
2. The first is the benefit of justification. The Lord Jesus granted us this grace by his death as a sacrifice for our sins. This justification is free, as said by the Apostle Paul.
3. The second grace is sanctification. After justifying us, the Lord also sanctified us and presented us to his Father a holy people and a holy, pure, and chosen Church.
4. The third benefit is adoption. By this grace, the Lord made us spiritual sons of his heavenly Father.
5. We should preserve these graces by doing good deeds.

Chapter 6: The Holy Spirit and His Bestowed Talents.

"The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

(Isaiah 11:2)

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things, and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

(John14:26)

The Holy Spirit is the third *qnuma* of the Holy Trinity. He is a part of the Godhead and has all the divine attributes of the Father and of the Son, especially the property of Procession. For he proceeded from the Father, as the Lord Jesus said, "The Spirit of truth, which proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me." (John 15:26)

The Holy Spirit descended on the holy disciples in the Upper Room of Zion." (Act 2:1–14). This was a fulfillment of the promise of the Lord Jesus who said to them, "I am going to send you what my Father has promised, but stay in the city [Jerusalem] until you have been clothed with power from on high." (Luke 42:49)

The promise of the Father is naturally the Holy Spirit, as it is understood from the words of the Lord's saying. "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things, and will remind you of everything I have said to you." (John14:26).

The Holy Spirit appeared tangibly twice: the first in the form of a dove at the baptism of the Lord Jesus. (Matthew 3:16) The second time it appeared like fiery tongues descending on the disciples in the Upper Room." (Acts 2:1–14). In fact, the Holy Spirit will descend on any believer at Baptism and Confirmation, and the

reception of the sacrament of the Priesthood. In this case, the words of the Prophet Joel are fulfilled, "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy; your old men will dream dreams." (Joel 2:28)

The Holy Spirit has seven talents which will be granted to the Christian person to confirm him in the faith and direct him to walk in the path of virtue and perfection, and make him preserve the grace of redemption. These talents are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge, godliness, and the fear of the Lord. They are mentioned by Isaiah who said, "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." (Isaiah 11:2)

SUMMARY

1. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Holy Trinity. He has all the attributes of the Godhead, just like the Father and the Son. His property is the Procession, for he proceeds from the Father according to the teaching of the Lord Jesus.
2. The Holy Spirit rested on the holy disciples in the Upper Room of Sion as a fulfillment of the promise of the Lord.
3. The Holy Spirit appeared tangibly twice. Once, it appeared like a dove at the baptism of the Lord; the second, it appeared at Pentecost like fiery tongues which rested on the disciples.
4. The Holy Spirit rests on all the believers at Baptism, Confirmation, and the Priesthood.
5. The Holy Spirits has seven talents mentioned by the Prophet Isaiah.
6. These talents grant the Christian believer specific graces which make him preserve the graces incurred by redemption.

Book Four:
The Church and Its Sacraments

Chapter 1: The Church

> "And on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it."
>
> (Matthew 16:18)

The Lord Jesus established his Church by his divine power, based on the words of Peter, who was inspired by the Holy Spirit, and by a specific revelation from the Father, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16). These words became the constitution of the Christian Church; nay, its firm rock on which it was built. Therefore, the Lord said to Peter, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not overcome it." (Matthew 16:17–18). Thus, the rock of the Church is the belief that the Lord Jesus is the Son of the living God.

The term *church* has many meanings in the New Testament. The most important of these meanings are the following:

1. The Church is the community of believers who maintain one orthodox faith (see Romans 16:5) either in the whole world (Acts 5:11; Romans 16:16), or in one city and one diocese, such as the Churches of Jerusalem and Antioch. (Acts 15:4). St. Cyril of Jerusalem said, "If you say Church, you have actually professed that the Church is the community of believers."

2. The Church is one holy house where the believers meet to worship. (1 Corinthians 11:18; and 2 Corinthians 8:18).

3. The body of the clergy is also called "the Church." (Matthew 18:17), or the community of believers (Acts 2:47).

The characteristics of the Church according to the second Ecumenical Council (The Council of Constantinople, 381 A.D.), are it is one, catholic (universal), holy, and apostolic. These characteristics are confirmed by the New Testament. Let us study each of these points:

1. The Church of Christ is one, because it has one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all. (Ephesians 4:5).

In fact, Jesus himself came for this purpose, as he says, "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd." (John 10:16) The fathers of the Church confirmed this. St. Basil the Great said, "All of those whose hope is Jesus Christ are one people. The Christians are but one Church, although they belong to many countries." (Basil, Letter 393). St. John Chrysostom said, "The Churches in the cities and the villages are many, but the Church is one, because Christ is in each of them wholly and undivided."

2. The Church of Christ is catholic (universal). It gathers under its banner all races and nations, unlike the Jewish church, which was special for the people of Israel. The Lord commanded his disciples saying, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19. See also Luke 24:47; Mark 16:15 and Acts 1:8.) The purpose of Christ from all this is to bind his peoples with the bond of love and peace. Church fathers do confirm this bond of the catholic (universal) Church.

3. The Church is holy, because she was sanctified by the Lord. (John 17:7) He washed her by water and the Spirit (Acts 15:8), sanctified her by his blood (Galatians 1:14), and gave himself up for her in order to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant Church, without stain or wrinkle or any blemish, but holy and blameless. (Ephesians 5:25–27).

4. The Church is apostolic. She is apostolic because she received the teaching which the Apostles received from the Lord himself. (1 Corinthians 11:23) She is built on the foundation of the prophets and the Apostles, and on Jesus himself, the corner stone. (Ephesians 2:20) She is also apostolic because her shepherds and chief priests received their authority from the Apostles in generation after generation. This authority began with the Apostle Peter, the greatest patriarch, who sat upon the throne of Antioch, until it reached our present Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphram Barsoum, by the choice of the Holy Spirit and his direction. [The present Patriarch of Antioch is Mor Zakka Iwas.]

SUMMARY

1. Christ built his Church on the faith in his Godhead, proclaimed by Peter, saying, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
2. The term *church* has many meanings in the New Testament. Most important of them is that the Church is the community of believers in the whole world or in a single city or diocese. Also, it means specifically the ranks of the clergy or the congregation.
3. The Church of Christ has four distinct characteristics, which were determined by the Council Second Ecumenical Council (The Council of Constantinople, 381 A.D.) which decreed that the Church is one, catholic (universal), holy, and apostolic.
4. The Church is one because it has one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.
5. The Church is catholic (universal), because it gathers under her banner all nations without distinction.
6. The Church is holy, because the Lord Chris sanctified her by his immaculate blood and presented her to himself a holy Church without stain or blemish.
7. The Church is apostolic because she received her teaching from the Apostles and preserved it. She is also apostolic because her leaders received their authority from St. Peter and down throughout generation until the present. St. Pater was the first and the great patriarch of Antioch. Today the patriarch in charge of its affairs is Mor Ignatius Aphram. [The present Patriarch is Mor Zakka Iwas.]

Chapter 2: Mystery—Church Sacraments

> "The mystery that has been hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."
>
> (Colossians 1:26–27)

According to Church terminology, mystery has two meanings: the first is that mystery is a reality which surpasses human understanding. It is revealed by God and should be maintained. An example is the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and especially, the mystery of the Incarnation and of Redemption as indicated by the Apostle Paul, who said, "The mystery that has been hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:26–27). The second is that mystery is a sign meant by the Church to proclaim the divine grace hidden in her for the purpose of sanctifying the believers. The mysteries are the known Seven Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation of the baptized by anointing them with *mirun* (to be explained later), Penance, Holy Eucharist (Communion), Holy Orders (Priesthood), Anointing of the Sick, and Matrimony.

Some of these sacraments are necessary for everyone, while others are not. Of the first category is Baptism, Confirmation or Anointing by the *Mirun*, Penance, and the Eucharist. Of the second category are Holy Orders, Anointing of the Sick, and Matrimony. Three of these sacraments can be received only once. They are Baptism, Confirmation by the *Mirun*, and Holy Orders. The rest of the sacraments can be repeated with the direction of the Church and its canons.

There are three necessary requirements for the sacraments without which they cannot be consummated. They are: substance, form, and administration.

Substance is a constituent of the tangible material things which should be fulfilled like the water used in Baptism.

Form is the essential words uttered by the officiating priest in order to consummate it like the words of sanctification enunciated in the Eucharist.

Administration is consummated by a specific person, such as the bishop or the canonical priest.

These sacraments grant us grace or increase grace in us. They give us a right to receive certain help, which will lead us to the ultimate objective of the sacrament. For instance, by the sacraments of Baptism and Penance, we receive the life of grace and become freed from the death caused by sin.

The Confirmation or Anointing by the *Mirun*, marks the Christian a soldier of Christ, ever ready to profess openly his faith in him, even under the worst persecutions.

The Holy Orders (Priesthood) make the Christian who assumes them a servant of Christ and his Church. They give him the authority to serve these sacraments and offer them to the believers.

SUMMARY

1. Mystery (sacrament) has two meaning in Church's terminology. The first is the knowledge which passes human understanding, such as the mystery of the Holy Trinity; the second is a tangible sign marked by the Church to proclaim the divine grace hidden in her.
2. There are Seven Sacrament in the catholic (universal) Church. They are: Baptism, Confirmation by the anointing with *mirun*, Penance, Eucharist (Communion), Anointing of the Sick, and Matrimony. Four of these sacraments are necessary for all people, and the rest are not. The necessary ones are: Baptism, Confirmation by anointing with *mirun*, Penance, and the Eucharist. The rest are not necessary for all people. Three of the sacraments can be offered only once. They are Baptism, Confirmation by the *Mirun*, and Holy Orders. The rest can be granted by the instruction of the Church.

3. There are three requirements for the fulfillment of the sacraments: substance, form, and administration. Substance is the material things used to fulfill them, like water in Baptism. Form is the essential words uttered by the priest, after which the elements (bread and wine) can be administered to the believers. Administration is fulfilled by a canonical priest.
4. Sacraments grant believers justifying grace or increase it in them. It also grants them certain assistance in order to achieve the ultimate objective of the sacrament.

Chapter 3: The Sacrament of Baptism

> "No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."
>
> (John 3:5)

Baptism is a mystery established by the Lord Jesus. By Baptism, the baptized is born a second birth by water and the Spirit. He becomes a living member in the body of the true Church. He obtains the forgiveness of sins and becomes worthy to receive the rest of the sacraments.

Without the sacrament of Baptism, no one can enter the kingdom of God, as the Lord said. (See John 3:5.) The necessity of this sacrament is clear in the New Testament, where the Lord taught his disciples, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19) He also said, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16)

The material requirement of Baptism is pure water. The form is the words uttered by the administrator of this sacrament saying, "The servant of Christ (X) is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." He says this in conformity with the words of the Lord saying to his disciples, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19) The administrator of this sacrament is the canonical priest and with him is associated its consummation.

Child baptism has been performed in the Christian Church since its inception. It was done for fear that might die in their infancy and become deprived of this grace. St. Gregorius the Theologian (of Nazianzus, d. 390), said, "Do you have a child? Let evil

take no opportunity with him. But he should be sanctified while still a suckling and consecrated while still an infant." (See his *Discourse on Baptism.*) Augustine (Bishop of Hippo 396–430) said, "The Church has always upheld the baptism of children, which she received from early forefathers. And she is still keeping this practice till this day, and will keep it on until the end of the world." (See his *Discourse* 117.)

Those who come to Baptism while they are adults should be baptized after being examined for a period of time according to Church canons. After their learning the mysteries of Christianity and loudly professing the Lord Jesus, they are bestowed the sacrament of Baptism.

Baptism is bestowed only once, because it is the mystery of the death of Christ, as the Apostle Paul said, "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through Baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the father, we too may have a new life." (Romans 6:3–4)

Martyrdom and anxiousness may be substituted for Baptism. Martyrdom is done when an adult is killed unjustly as a testimony for the Christian faith and virtue. Children who die for the sake of Christ also benefit from martyrdom. Desire is when the believer dies before receiving Baptism while he is truly anxious to have it.

The baptized person should have a godfather who professes the faith in his stead if he is young. He will be charged with teaching him if he is an adult, or if he had lost his father or mother, or if he could not personally profess the faith.

SUMMARY

1. Baptism is a mystery established by Christ. By Baptism, we are born anew by water and the Spirit.
2. Baptism is necessary according to the words of Christ who said, "No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." (John 3:5)
3. The material requirement of Baptism is natural water. Its form is the word uttered by the baptizer, and the service is performed by the priest.
4. The completion of the baptismal sacrament is associated with the lawful priests under normal circumstances.

5. Child baptism has been practiced by the Church from the beginning. This is testified by ancient *malphone*. This baptism is necessary and mandatory.
6. Those adults who come to Baptism should not be baptized unless they are carefully examined, and the Church is sure of their confirmed faith in the Lord Jesus. They should also be taught the mysteries of Christianity.
7. Baptism is bestowed only once, because it is the mystery of the death of Christ according to the teaching f St. Paul.
8. Baptism may be substituted by martyrdom or anxiousness for it.
9. Every baptized person should have a godfather who professes faith on his behalf if he is young, and teach him the mysteries and duties of religion.

Chapter 4: The Sacrament of *Mirun* (Chrism)

> "Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfume; your name is like perfume poured out."
>
> (Song of Songs 1:3)

Mirun is a Greek term meaning "perfume." (See Bar Hebraeus, *Book of Rays*.) It is a compound of pure olive oil, fragrant plants, and balsamic oil. Since ancient times, the Church used it in conjunction of God's order to Moses saying, "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Take the following fine spices.... Make these into a sacred anointing oil, a fragrant blend of a perfumer. It will be the sacred anointing oil.'" (Exodus 30:23–25, and Bar Hebraeus, *Book of Rays*) *Mirun* represents the pleasant fragrance of Christ. "Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfume; your name is like perfume poured out." (Song of Songs 1:3) Christ established the sacrament to bestow on us a specific grace and talents of the Holy Spirit in order to confirm us in the faith like completely armed soldiers of Jesus Christ. We are also meant to proclaim this faith by word and deed.

The *mirun* is consecrated by the Patriarch of Antioch once a year on Maundy Thursday, or on a Sunday or a festival day.

The ingredients of the *mirun*, as we have said previously, are pure olive oil mixed with fragrant plants and balsamic oil. Confirmation's form are the words uttered by the officiating priest immediately after Baptism to confirm the baptized in the faith. The person who proceeds to receive this sacrament should be pure of body and soul. If he is an adult, he should be knowledgeable of the mysteries of Christianity.

The *mirun* is also used to anoint altars, temple, *tablithos* (that is, tables of offering), according to God's command to Moses, "Then use it to anoint the Tabernacle (Tent of Meeting), the Ark of the Testimony, the table and all the articles, the lamp stand and its ac-

cessories, the altar of incense, the altar of burned offering and all its utensils, and the basin with its stand. You shall consecrate them so they will be most holy, and whatever touches them will be holy." (Exodus 30:26–29). Also, believing kings are anointed with *mirun* upon their coronation.

According to the New Testament, the disciples used to place their hands on the baptized people and they received the Holy Spirit. (Act 8:17). This points to the holy *mirun* which, in fact, is like an indirect manner of the chief priest placing his hands on the baptized, and they receive the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the chief priest resembles the holy Apostles.

St. Paul pointed to the *mirun*, the oil of anointment for Confirmation, saying, "Now it is God who makes both of us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our heart as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." (2 Corinthians 1:22–23) St. John the Apostle said, "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth." (1 John 2:20)

SUMMARY

1. *Mirun* is a Greek term meaning perfume.
2. It indicates the pleasant fragrance of Christ.
3. *Mirun* is made of pure olive oil mixed with fragrant plants and balsamic oil.
4. Christ established this sacrament in order to bestow on us a special grace and the talents of the Holy Spirit, and confirms us in the faith like perfect solders for Christ and sets up to proclaim this faith.
5. The ingredients of the *mirun* are pure olive oil mixed with fragrant plants and balsamic oil. Its form is the words uttered as the baptized is anointed. These words are the seal of the talent of the Holy Spirit.
6. The person who proceeds to receive the sacrament of *Mirun*, should be of pure body and soul. If he is an adult, he should have knowledge of the most specific mysteries of Christianity.
7. *Mirun* is also used to anoint altars, temples, and tables of offering.

8. *Mirun* represents the laying on of hands, which the Apostles used immediately after Baptism, and the Holy Spirit will rest on the baptized.

Chapter 5: The Sacrament of Penance and Confession of Sins.

"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."

(James 5:16)

Christ ordained the sacrament of Penance and Confession of Sins to grant the believers forgiveness of sins committed after their Baptism. He handed it down to his disciples saying, "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." (John 20:23) The disciples handed it down to their successors, the lawful episcope and priests.

1. True penance and confession of sins require certain conditions in order to be complete and beneficial. Most important of these conditions are true repentance, examination of the conscience, and admission of sin before a lawful priest.

True penance and contrition of heart is deep sorrow, which generates in the heart and soul of the repentant for the sins by which he angered God with the intention not to return to them. This intention is the strong will the contrite sinner exerts in order not to repair to sin again.

2. The examination of conscience. This requires a diligent search for all the sins committed since the last confession. Here, the penitent should ask God's help to remind him of the sins he had committed, whether by word and deed or thought. He should also search for the number of these sins, their kinds, and circumstances.

3. The confession of sins before a lawful priest. This is very necessary for the Christian. He should present it as a charge against his guilty self, which has committed sins and angered God. This admission should be total in order that the priest may offer for it a complete healing of spiritual sickness. Without this admission, the

priest cannot offer an antidote to his tormented soul. Therefore, the penitent should mention his major and minor sins, but not mention the name of the person who participated with him in the sin. However, if he forgot a major or minor sin, he should confess it as soon as he remembers it. But if he is reluctant to mention any sin intentionally, he will not benefit from his confession, and this will increase his sin. In this case, he is not allowed to draw near from the Table of Life and receive the Holy Communion. If in the case he received the Communion fraudulently, he should inform the priest of how many times he did this and express repentance. Then, the priest who heard his confession will allow him to partake in the Communion.

The Church canon in this regard is the spiritual antidote. The confessor should impose it by wisdom and carefulness on the penitent according to the number and kinds of his sins and their circumstances. Then, the priest should take into consideration the material and spiritual situation of the penitent, and strengthen him that he may not fall again into sin. As to the penitent, he should abide quickly and exactly by what the confessor priest has imposed on him with faith, not unless the priest has appointed for him a date to do so. In case the penitent could not abide by this Church canon, he should beseech the priest to change it with another canon with great obedience.

The Apostles made it necessary for all Christians to express true repentance. In the Acts of the Apostles it is said, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out." (Acts 3:19) Also, the Apostles instituted Confession of Sins openly before a priest, as the Apostle James said, "Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." (James 5:16)

SUMMARY

1. Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance to grant salvation for the believers' sins. He handed it to his holy disciples who, in turn, handed it their successors, the lawful bishops and priests.
2. Penance has necessary conditions in order to be complete and beneficial. These conditions are complete repentance, examination of conscience and admission of sins before a lawful priest.

3. Complete penance means profound remorse of the sinner's heart and mind for the sins he has committed. It should be accompanied by the examination of conscience. This requires a genuine search of the sins committed their kinds and circumstances.
4. Admission of sins should be made before a lawful priest. The repentant should disclose all his sins great and small, and never leave a single one unmentioned.
5. The penitent should not mention his partner in the sin.
6. If the penitent forgot one sin, he should confess it when he remembers it.
7. If the penitent deliberately left out one of his sins, he would commit a grave sin, and should admit how many times he did this.
8. The Church canon is the antidote the priest offers the penitent.
9. This canon should be conveyed to the penitent with prudence according to the kinds of his sins and their circumstances, taking into consideration his spiritual and material ability.
10. The Apostles made true penance mandatory for every living Christian and confessing it before a priest.

Chapter 6: Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist (Communion)

> "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'"
>
> (Matthew 26:26–29)

The Holy Eucharist (Communion) is the great gift and mystery of the faith offered by the Savior. The Eucharist exists outwardly in the form of bread and wine, which are the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are offered as a sacrifice for our behalf, and provide us with spiritual nourishment.

The Eucharist is consecrated by a lawful priest through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Eucharist was instituted by Christ in the night of his passion on Maundy Thursday of the Passover, as we are told by the evangelists. Matthew said, "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, Gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" (Matthew 26:26–29)

The bread and the wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ. This is asserted by St. Paul who said, "Is not the cup for thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16)

The Holy Communion is the mysterious bloodless sacrifice of the new covenant in which Jesus Christ offers to God through the

priest, his holy body and blood in the form of bread and wine. It represents the great sacrifice on the Cross, and reminds us of the Savior's words, "Do this in remembrance of me."

This divine sacrifice is offered to God the Father in order to adore and glorify him. It is also meant to thank him for his grace and the good things he bestowed on us, and to receive forgiveness of sins for the quick and the dead. The Church has also offered this sacrifice in honor of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, or to the saints, eliciting for their intercession. In this sense, the Church does not offer this sacrifice to them personally, but to God alone.

The sacrifice of the Eucharist is different from that of the Cross only in form and circumstance. The sacrifice of the Cross was bloody, as Christ offered himself a living sacrifice to his Father; the Eucharist is bloodless. In it, Christ is offered by the priest as a sacrifice in the form of bread and wine. And what effect the people receive from the sacrifice of the Cross, the same they also receive from this one.

Christ instituted this great sacrament as a food for our souls and for our eternal life. He said, glory to him, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him." (John 6:53–56)

The Lord intended several purposes by the institution of this sacrament. Most important of these purposes are the following:

1. To be present among us according to his divine will. He said, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

2. To unite him to us when we partake in the Communion. He said, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him" (John 6:56)

3. That the Communion will be life for us, and lead us to eternal life, as he said, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life." (John 6:54). The person who desire to partake in the Holy Communion must be a Christian, baptized and in the state of grace. He should also know the mysteries of Christianity. He should be of pure body and soul. He should attend the celebration of the Eucharist (the Liturgy) with clear mind, impeccable

conscience, and complete humility and piety. (The sick are exempted.) This will make him worthy for this divine grace.

This sacrament should be accomplished with utmost caution and restraint, as the Apostle Paul said, "A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself." (1 Corinthians:28–29)

Before approaching the Table to partake this sacrament, the Christian should contemplate its magnificence and God's compassion by giving him this spiritual food to nourish his soul and grant him eternal life. He should then draw near the Table of Life with great humility and awe, and take the jewel (the consecrated particle) with avid faith.

The benefits of taking the Communion are numerous, most important of which are union with Christ, renewal of the soul, rejecting evil desires, receiving of grace, and becoming worthy to enter into the kingdom of God. When man receives these graces after partaking in the Communion, he should give thanks to God. He should contemplate through the Spirit this marvelous mystery which Christ offered his disciples. He should spend the day reading the Holy Scriptures, praying, spiritually contemplating, and cherishing the pleasure of his Communion.

Summary

1. The Holy Eucharist is a sacrament instituted by Christ on the night of his passion in the festival of the Passover.
2. The bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ after the call of the officiating priest to rest on them
3. The holy Eucharist is the sacrifice of the New Testament, in which Jesus offers himself a mysterious holy immolation to his Father, through the priest, for all mankind, the quick and the dead.
4. The sacrifice of the Liturgy differs from the sacrifice of the Cross in that the sacrifice of the Cross is bloody while the other is bloodless.
5. Christ instituted this sacrament as a food for our souls that we may become united with him and he becomes present among us.

6. He who partakes in the sacrament of the Communion should be a true Christian and have fulfilled the known conditions of receiving it.
7. He who receives the Communion without worthiness is actually receiving judgment on himself.
8. He who draws near the Table of Life to partake of the Communion should contemplate the magnificence of this sacrament.
9. After partaking of it, he should offer God thanks for this grace.
10. The benefits of the Communion are many, including union with Christ, renewal of soul, suppressing evil desires, and receiving grace in order to enter the kingdom of God.

Chapter 7: The Sacrament of Holy Orders (Priesthood)

> "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual home to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."
>
> (1 Peter 2:5) *In the Septuagint, this is translated as "Be spiritual temples and holy priests."*

The Lord set down the priesthood in his Church that she may have bishops and priests to whom he grants authority and grace in order to carry out the mysteries of the Church and its function, perform prayers, take charge of the believers, and guide them to the path of salvation. The Lord set up his holy disciples as bishops and priests when he authorized them the power of forgiving sins and to bind and loose. He said to them, "And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." (John 20:22–23) He also gave them the power to render the bread and the wine his body and blood, saying, "Do this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19)

The Apostles appointed priests to every Church. (Acts 14:23) They commanded them saying, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the Church of God, which he bought with his own blood." (Acts 2:28)

The priesthood possesses a great honor because of the grand services and the sublime function attached to it. Indeed, Christ made the Apostles and their successors equal to him when he said to them, "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you reject me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." (Luke 10:16)

The function of the priesthood in the New Testament is spiritual. It is confined to the offering of spiritual sacrifices, as the Apostle Peter said, "As you come to him, the living stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:5).

There are certain qualifications the person who seeks the priesthood of the New Testament should fulfill. Most of them were mentioned by St. Paul to his disciple Timothy. He said, "Here is a trustworthy saying; if anyone sets his heart on being an overseer (bishop), he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband but of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money." (1 Timothy 3:2–4).

The priesthood has three basic ranks which the Apostle made clear in their letters. They are the ranks of deacons, priests, and bishops, all of which are confirmed by the New Testament. The administrator of the Priesthood sacrament is the bishop. The archpriest or the patriarch has the authority to ordain bishops, priests, and deacons for the churches according to the teaching handed down by the Apostles.

SUMMARY

1. Christ instituted the Priesthood sacrament to set up bishops and priests for the Church, who would implement the holy sacraments and teach them to her children and guide them to the path of life and prayer.
2. Christ appointed his disciples as bishops and priests. He gave them the power to bind and loose, and to render the bread and the wine his own body and blood.
3. The Apostles set up in every Church bishops and priests to shepherd the believers.
4. Priesthood is a great honor because of the magnificent service it performs. Christ made the priestly ranks with himself.
5. He who desires to become a true overseer (bishop or priest), should have the qualifications described by St. Paul. He should be free from legal impediments and spir-

itual and corporeal blemishes. He should be free from evil desires. He should be known for piety, virtual, knowledge, perseverance, and zeal for the salvation of souls.

6. There are three ranks of the priesthood: that of a deacon, of a priest, and of a bishop.
7. The administrator of the Priesthood is the patriarch and the bishop.

Chapter 8: The Sacrament of Anointing the Sick (Syriac: The Rite of the Lamp)

> "Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the Church (priests) to pray over him and anoint him in the name of the Lord. "
>
> (James 5:14)

This sacrament which is a compound of pure olive oil is divine. It is instituted by the Lord Christ. The priest anoints the body of the patient and asks divine grace to heal his spiritual and physical illness. St. James the Apostle, brother of the Lord, instructed that Christians should use it to fulfill what has been instituted by the Lord Jesus. For the Apostles did not command it personally. This sacrament was confirmed by Origen in his *Book of the Patriarchs*, discourse 2, no. 4; by St. John Chrysostom in his *Book on the Priesthood*, discourse 3:6; and by St. Cyril of Alexandria in his *Book The Worship in Spirit and Truth*, section 4. This sacrament is administered by the priests who bless the oil by uttering obligatory prayers. Then, they anoint parts of the patient's body, especially his forehead, chest, knees and some other parts. As St. James said, "And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he had sinned, he will be forgiven." (James 5:15)

In our Syrian Church, there is another holy ointment known as the Holy Oil of Anointment accompanied by the Prayer of Oil. With this oil the priest anoints the person who would be baptized and before anointing him with the holy *mirun*. It is also used for anointing the sick. The bishop is the only one who consecrates this oil, usually in mid-Lent. See Bar Hebraeus, *Book of Hudoyo* (No-

mcanon, or *Book of Directions)*, pp. 25, 28, 43, quoted from John of Thella and Jacob of Edessa.

The sacrament of Anointing the Sick has the following effects.

1. It comforts the patient and strengthens him to suffer sickness and resists ordeals especially in his latest illness.

2. It blots out his sins which have not been yet forgiven according to the readiness of his heart.

3. It heals his natural sickness if such healing is consistent with the salvation of his soul and with God's will.

This sacrament should not be administered to the adult patient unless he has fulfilled the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion. The reason is that the sacrament [of Anointing the Sick] is an integral part of Penance. However, it may be offered to the believer in his old age. In case the anointed patient was healed but then relapsed into sickness, this sacrament may be administered to him a second or a third time.

SUMMARY

1. The sacrament of Anointing the Sick is instituted by the Lord Christ; it was recommended by St. James the Apostle.
2. The unction oil is consecrated by the priests who anoint special parts of the patient's body.
3. This sacrament is administered after the patient had fulfilled the two sacraments of Penance and taking the Holy Communion.
4. The benefits of anointing the patient is to comfort him and strengthen him to endure sickness and resist ordeals.
5. It will bolt out his sins which he had committed inadvertently. It will also heal him from natural maladies if the healing is appropriate to the salvation of his soul.

Chapter 9: The Sacrament of Matrimony

"The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.' So the Lord God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord made a woman from the rib and he brought her to the man. The man said, 'This is now a bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man.'"

(Genesis 2:18–23)

Marriage is a holy sacrament. It is a legal union between a believing man and a believing woman to produce a pure Christian progeny. It is a cooperation of living and raising children.

The union between a man and a woman is a great mystery, as St. Paul says, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a profound mystery." (Ephesians 5:30–32).

The most important condition of marriage is the consent of the two parties. It should be contracted by a lawful priest in the presence of witnesses. It should not be contracted with a consanguineous person (of close blood relations) of both the man and the woman. It should not be done before the naturally legal age. Divorce cannot be affected unless it is commensurate with the holy canons of the Church.

The believing husband cannot marry another woman while his first wife is still living. Also, the wife cannot marry another man while her husband is still living. (Matthew 19:4-6). Thus, the marriage of believers rests upon divine and canonical Church rights.

The husband and the wife have obligations toward each other. These duties were made clear by St. Paul who said, "Wives submit

to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church.... Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the Church and gave up himself for her.... Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself." (Ephesians 5:23–28).

The man and the woman should raise their children in the Christian principles in order to be fruitful in the garden of the Church. A good upbringing of the children is a natural and worthwhile endeavor, as St. Paul commanded saying, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4) In turn, the children should obey their parents according to the Fifth Commandment, "Honor your father and mother, so that you may live long on earth." (Exodus 20:12) This was also commanded by St. Paul who said, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." (Ephesians 6:1)

SUMMARY

1. Marriage is a holy mystery. It is the legal union between a Christian man and a Christian woman to procure a pure progeny and to cooperate to live and raise children in an excellent manner.
2. The most important conditions of marriage is the consent of the two parties, and should be affected by a lawful priest in the presence of witnesses.
3. The husband cannot marry another woman while his wife is still living. Also, the wife cannot marry another man while her husband is still living.
4. The husband should love his wife in a manner pleasing to God. He should cooperate with her to raise their children. In turn, the wife should honor her husband and help him in administering the home and raising the children.
5. Children should obey and respect their parents and take care of them in sickness and old age.

Book Five: Prayer: Obligations and Times of Prayer

Chapter 1: Prayer

"Pray continually."

(1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Prayer is to raise the believing soul to God with awe and supplication, to talk to him, to adore him, to thank him for his goodness and to ask him for necessary needs. The Lord Christ commanded that prayer should be frequent: "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up." (Luke 18:1) So also, did the Apostle Paul saying, "Pray continually." (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Prayer is necessary and indispensable for man in order to express his gratitude. It is also necessary because God commands so. In fact, God grants more help to those who ask him for it. He says, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds." (Matthew 7:7–8). Some fathers of the Church said that, "Prayer is dispensable for the life of the soul as breathing is for the life of the body."

Prayer has conditions. When they are fulfilled, he who prays will achieve the purpose of his praying. Most important of these conditions are the following:

1. Faith. Faith is necessary for prayer. This is attested by the Lord who said, "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, Go throw yourself into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done to him." (Mark 11:24)

2. Hope. Like faith, hope is necessary, as the Holy Bible teaches, "And for this we labor and strive, that we have put our hope in the living God." (1 Timothy 4:10), and "The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask for help." (1 Timothy 5:5) So also do the fathers of the universal Church teach.

3. Love of God and neighbor. Love of God is necessary because without it prayer is empty and cannot be considered genuine.

Love of neighbor is also necessary that man may forgive his neighbor as the Lord said, "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." (Matthew 6:14) He also said, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there you remembered that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and reconcile to your brother; then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23–24)

4. Prayer should be said in the name of the Lord Christ. He, glory to him, said, "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father." (John 14:13) He also said, "Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." (John 15:16)

5. Perseverance, as the Lord said, "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up." (Luke 18:1) So also, did the Apostle Paul saying, "Pray continually." (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

6. Persistence, as the Lord explained this in the parable of the unjust judge and the widow. (Luke 18:1–8)

Prayer is of two kinds: mental and verbal. The mental is communicating with God mentally by contemplation, as Hannah, Samuel's mother, did. "As she kept praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard." (1 Samuel 1:12–13) The Apostle Paul urged mental prayer saying, "Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship." (Romans 12:1)

Like the mental prayer is the solitary prayer. It is loved by God, especially if it is said in secret as the Lord taught us saying, "But when you pray, go into your room close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." (Matthew 6:6)

The verbal prayer is said by pronounced words. It is either individual or collective. The individual prayer is said by one person alone as we mentioned earlier. It is what the Lord did in the garden. (Matthew 26:36–46) The collective prayer is said by the church's congregation in the name of the Lord Jesus. And the Lord will be present with the praying people as he promised, "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." (Matthew 18:20)

The most important things we ask God for in prayer is the kingdom of God and his righteousness. The Lord commanded us saying, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33). We also ask for the magnification of his name and the redemption of our souls. We also ask him for the necessary things for our spiritual life. As to earthly amentias, we request them from God if they do not contradict his will or do harm to our neighbor. The Lord has warned us to constrain ourselves when asking him for earthly things, saying, "Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?" (Matthew 6:25) But he commanded us to be satisfied with our daily bread. (Matthew 6:11)

SUMMARY

1. Prayer is the raising of the believing soul to God in order to communicate with him with awe and supplication, and asking him for our needs.
2. Prayer is necessary for the soul as food is necessary for the body, and the soul for life.
3. Prayer has six conditions in order to be consummate and acceptable. They are: faith, hope, love. It should be said in the name of the Lord Jesus; it should be persevered, and continual.
4. Prayer is either mental or verbal.
5. The verbal prayer is individual or collective. Each of them has special benefits.
6. The most important things we should ask while praying is the kingdom of God and his righteousness, the glory of his name, salvation of our souls and of our neighbor, and the necessary needs of our spiritual life.

Chapter 2: Praying Toward the East

"And from the rising of the sun, they will revere his glory."

(Isaiah 59:19)

Prayer toward the East has been established by the Church from the beginning. When the Christian is praying, he is anticipating the coming of the Lord. We know that the Lord will come from the East as the Gospel tells us, "For as the lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." (Matthew 24:27)

We are strangers in this life and expect to return to our true and immortal home, which is the garden from which we were expelled through transgression. This is the garden which the Lord planted in the east of Eden. (Genesis 2:8). Therefore, we should direct ourselves to it.

The Apostles commanded the believers to direct themselves toward the east in prayer. They said, "Prayer should be performed facing east and temples [churches] built to face the east. Prayer should be directed toward the east from which the Lord will appear in his second coming." (The Apostolic Canon 30.) Indeed, the Holy Bible described the Lord Jesus "as the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings." (Malachi 4:2) Of course, the sun rises in the east.

Summary

1. Prayer toward the east has been established by the Church from the beginning.
2. During prayer, Christians direct themselves toward the east, because they expect the coming of the Lord Jesus from the east.
3. Mankind waits to return to its first true home, the Garden of Eden, which was in the east.

4. The Apostles command that churches should be built facing the east. Prayer should also be performed by the believers facing the east.
5. The Holy Scriptures described the Lord as "the sun of righteousness." And because the sun rises in the east, we direct ourselves toward the east.
6. We await the appearance of the Lord's glory from the east, according to the teaching of the Holy Bible.

Chapter 3: The Times of Prayer

"Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws."

(Psalm 119:164)

The Lord set up seven times a day for prayer on the authority of the Psalmist [David] as previously mentioned. The Book of Acts mention that the Apostles prayed in the following times: "the ninth hour," (Acts 3:1, and 10:3), midnight (Acts 1:16–21), the third hour (Acts 2:15), and the sixth hour (Acts 10:9).

Prayer times are seven: evening, sleep time, midnight, morning, the third hour, the sixth hour, and the ninth hour. These times of prayer have significant purposes as shall be seen in the following:

1. The Evening Prayer. We pray at this time to offer thanks to God who has made the night for us to rest from the toil of the day. (See Jacob of Bartulli, *The Book of Treasures*, Section 2, paragraph 27.) We also remember that at this hour, our Lord Jesus was brought down from the Cross. (Matthew 27:57) Like the thief, we beseech him to remember us in his second coming. He said to the thief, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43)

2. The Sleep Time Prayer. Here we ask our Lord to save us from our spiritual and unspiritual enemies, and to remind us of the hour of death. We beseech him to save us from spiritual death which is a separation from him.

3. The Midnight Prayer. We pray at this time to thank God, who has prepared everything for our rest. We follow the example of the Prophet David who said, "At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws." (Psalm 119:62). Then we remember that our Lord Jesus prayed at this hour while his soul was overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death." (Luke 26:38).

4. The Morning Prayer. In the morning, we offer thanks to God for saving us from the horrors of the night and from our enemies, and for bestowing rest upon us. We also ask him to protect us and make us successful in our labor. We pray in the morning, in order to offer our first labors to God. The most important thing we should remember in this prayer is that the Lord Jesus was arrested in the morning, and in the early morning he resurrected.

5. The Third Hour Prayer. In this hour the Lord Jesus was tried before Pontius Pilate for our sake. He was bound and taken away [to be crucified]. We beseech him to loosen the binds of our sin and evil desires. We also remember that the Holy Spirit rested on the Apostles in the third hour of the day. (Acts 2:15) We beseech him to rest on us and grant us his divine gifts. Finally, we pray as did the men of God, especially our lords the Apostles. (Acts 2:15)

6. The Midday Prayer. We remember that at this time our Lord was driven to Golgotha amongst the crowd of Jews. He was crucified on the wood between two thieves for our sake. We pray at this time following the example of the prophets (Psalm 55:17), and the Apostles, the guides of the holy Church. (Acts 10:19)

7. The Ninth Hour Prayer. We remember that at his time our Lord gave up his divine soul in the hands of his heavenly Father. (Matthew 27:46–50). We beseech him to protect the grace we received by his death for our sake, and confirm us to walk in his straight path.

SUMMARY

1. The holy Church set up seven prayers a day in conformity with the orders of the Apostles and *malphone*.
2. The seven prayers are the Evening Prayer, the Prayer Before Sleeping, Midnight Prayer, Morning Prayer, the Third Hour Prayer, the Sixth Hour Prayer, and the Ninth Hour Prayer.
3. In the Evening Prayer, we mention the bringing down of the body of the Lord from the cross, and we ask him and thank him for a quiet night.
4. In the Prayer Before Sleeping, we ask God to protect us from the horrors of the night, and from our spiritual and unspiritual foes.

5. In the Midnight Prayer, we offer thanks to God who offered us rest. We also thank our Lord Jesus who at this hour prayed for us in the Garden of Gethsemane while his soul was overwhelmed by sorrow heavy.
6. In the Morning Prayer, we thank God for saving us from the horrors of the night, and beseech him to make our day labors successful. We also pray to offer the first fruits of our labor to God.
7. In the third hour, we remember the trial of the Lord Jesus before Pontius Pilate. We beseech him to loose from us the bonds of sin. We also remember the resting of the Holy Spirit on the disciples and ask for his gifts.
8. In the Ninth Hour Prayer, we remember that our Lord Jesus gave up the soul to the hands of his heavenly Father. We also remember that he died for us and beseech him to save us from spiritual death, and confirm us in his straight paths.

Chapter 4: The Sign of the Cross

> "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."
>
> (Galatians 6:14)

The cross is the pride and glory of the Christian Church. It is the only emblem by which it is known among nations. She magnifies it continuously, repeating the words of its teacher St. Paul, who said, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Galatians 6:14)

The Church received the sign of the cross from the holy Apostles. It is to her the power of God, as St. Paul said, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:18)

Since ancient times, the Church used the cross as testified by Tertullian, who lived in the second and third centuries. He said, "The Christians sign the cross on their faces whenever they do any work. They do it when they leave home or come back to it, when they dress or undress, and when they eat and drink." Tertullian's words confirm that the Church received the sign of the cross directly from the Apostles.

It was on the cross that our Lord Jesus died and granted us life. Therefore, the cross is the fountain of life, and the sign of the appearance of the Lord in his second coming. (Matthew 24:3) This is testified by St. Paul who said, "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to him all things, whether things on Earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." (Galatians 1:20)

We make the sign of the cross by placing the forefinger of our right hand on the forehead as we say, "In the name of the Father." Then, we move it to our breast saying, "And of the Son." We then place it on our left shoulder and moved it to the right shoulder as we say, "And of the Holy Spirit." Finally, we rest it on our heart saying, "One God. Amen."

This manner of signing the cross has magnificent meaning, as the Church teaches us. By placing the forefinger on the forehead and say "In the name of the Father," we profess that the Father is above all. And as we place finger on the breast and say, "And of the Son," we profess that the Son (Jesus) descended from the Father and dwelt in the womb of Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Finally, placing the finger on the left shoulder and moving it to the right one while saying, "And of the Holy Spirit," we affirm that, by his dwelling and gifts, the Holy Spirit has transported us from the left side which is considered the domain of darkness and torment to the right side which is the domain of bliss. And by placing the hand on the breast, we assert that our heart testifies that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one true God. And when concluding by Amen, we confess that everything we said is true.

SUMMARY

1. The cross is the emblem of the Christian Church, its pride and glory. This is asserted by St. Paul.
2. The sign of the cross was used since the early centuries of Christianity, as testified by the learned men.
3. Our Lord died on the cross and gave us life. Therefore, the cross is the fountain of life.
4. We sign the cross on our faces according to what or mother Church teaches us.
5. The sign of the cross has magnificent meanings according to the teaching of the holy fathers.

Chapter 5: The Trisagion (Thrice Holy)

> "And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'"
>
> (Isaiah 6:3)

> "Day and night they never stop saying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; who was and is and is to come.'"
>
> (Revelation 4:8)

The Trisagion is ancient. It was set up by the Church in order that her children may emulate the angels who were seen by Isaiah, who said about them, "And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'" (Isaiah 6:3) Also, they would emulate the Seraphim, who were seen by John, who said the following about them, "Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.'" The doctors of the Church universal affirm that the phrase "You who was crucified for us, have mercy upon us," is of Apostolic creation. They maintain that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodimus were the first to utter it at the burial of the Lord. Church doctors also ascribed its use to St. Ignatius the Fiery One, third patriarch of Antioch. Addai Scher, author of the book *Kaldo and Athor* (Chaldea and Athor), Volume 2, 135, says that St. Rabula of Edessa (413–435 A.D.), is the one who added the phrase "You who was crucified for us, have mercy upon us," to the Trisagion. Addai Scher quotes the published writings of Rabula by Overbeck.

The whole text of the Trisagion is as follows: "Holy you are God, holy you are the Immortal, you who was crucified for us, have mercy upon us." It is addressed to God the Word (Christ).

Remark

The Syrian Catholics, who seceded from our Church, deleted this phrase from the service. One of their Bishops, Gregorius Jirjis Shabin, wrote in his book Nahj Wasim fi Tarikh al-Umma al-Suryaniyya al-Qawim (The Graceful Path of the Authentic History of the Syrian Nation), (Beirut: Sabra Press, 1911), 23–24 the following:

Q. Why did the (Syrian) Catholics delete this phrase?

A. They deleted it either for ignorance on their part, or in obedience to the orders of the Roman Catholic Church, which they joined. If they appropriated glory only to the Holy Trinity, and deleted from it the phrase "You who was crucified for us, have mercy upon us," why did they retain the phrase "That by your death, our death is destroyed?" Has the whole Holy Trinity died for us? Certainly not. Therefore, it is imperative to retain the added phrase "You who was crucified for us have mercy upon us" in the adoration of the Holy Trinity, or delete both phrases from it, not unless they maintained that the phrase "who was crucified for us" is addressed to the entire adored Trinity.

SUMMARY

1. The Trisagion (Thrice Holy) is ancient in the Church and is of Apostolic origin.
2. It was set up in the Church in emulation of the angels, who praised God by Thrice Holy, according to the Prophet Isaiah and John of Revelation.
3. The Trisagion is addressed to God the Word (Jesus Christ). Therefore, we should end it by saying "You who was crucified for us, have mercy upon us."

Chapter 6: The Obligatory Prayer

> "Your decrees are the theme of my songs wherever I lodge. In the night, I remember your name, O Lord, and I will keep your law."
>
> (Psalm 119:54–55)

The Church set up special prayers to be addressed by her sons to God's majesty in solemn order. She called it the "Obligatory Prayer." Every Christian should say this prayer according to the teaching of the Church and the Holy Scriptures, as the Psalmist said, "Your decrees are the theme of my songs wherever I lodge. In the night, I remember your name, O Lord, and I will keep your law." (Psalm 119:54–55)

The general Obligatory Prayer is done by the praying person, who makes the sign of the holy cross on his face saying, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, one God. Amen." Then he says, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Blessed is he who has come, and will come in the name of the Lord. Glory to God in the highest." Then, he should say, "Holy are you God, Holy are you Almighty, Holy you are the Immortal, you who was crucified for us, have mercy upon us." He then follows by the Lord's Prayer.

The Obligatory Prayers consists of fifteen *qawme* (standing positions), ten in the morning and five in the evening. Each of these *qawme* include the Trisagion and the Lord's Prayer. He who prays could also add other prayers by the holy fathers and the Psalms, which the Church considers the best of prayers. The Apostle Paul commanded that Psalms should be recited saying, "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." (Ephesians 5:19, and Colossians 3:16). The praying person should conclude his prayer by iterating the angel's greeting of the Virgin in honoring her and beseeching her intercession.

SUMMARY

1. The Church set up private prayers to God called the Obligatory Prayer.
2. This prayer is performed by making the sign of the cross over the face, saying, In the name of the Father, etc., followed by Holy, holy, holy, followed by the Trisagion (Thrice Holy) and the Lord's Prayer.
3. The Obligatory Prayer consists of fifteen *qawme* (standing positions), ten in the morning and five in the evening.
4. This prayer includes the Trisagion and the Lord's Prayer.

Chapter 7: The Lord's Prayer

The Lord taught his disciples a perfect prayer which contains all of man's needs. It contains all the things we ask God for ourselves and for our neighbor. As one of the fathers said, "This prayer is the epitome of the Gospel, because it explains its intent of how the soul of man is elevated to God."

The disciples asked the Lord to teach them to pray. They said, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." (Luke 11:2) The Lord, who wanted serenity in praying, taught them a succinct prayer. He said to them, "And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." (Matthew 6:7–8). Then the Lord said, "This is how you should pray. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen." (Matthew 6:9–14)

The Lord's Prayer contains an introduction, seven supplications, and a conclusion. The introduction is "Our Father in heaven." We call on God our Father, expressing with confidence our love for him as children. We call him "Father," because he created us, and he protects us and give us direction. Moreover, he redeemed us by the blood of his only Son, who many times called us his brothers. Because we are brothers of his Son, we are, undoubtedly, his children. We have received this grace freely. St. Paul said, "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of Sonship. And by him we cry, *Abba*, Father." (Romans 8:15–16). By Sonship, all of us have be-

come brothers of Christ. Thus, each of us should pray for all of his brothers.

The first supplication: "hallowed be your name." We mention the name of God with sanctity, that our souls and thoughts may be sanctified. We also ask that his name be holy among all nations, as it is with us.

The second supplication: "your kingdom come." With this, we seek the kingdom of God, as we are taught by our Lord Jesus who said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)

The third supplication: "Your will be done in heaven as it is on earth." Here we submit our affairs to God to dispose of them according to his divine will, as the Lord prayed in the garden saying, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." (Matthew 26:42, Mark 14:36, and Luke 22:42) Furthermore, by saying "in heaven as it is on earth," we mean the heavenly host know Almighty God and adore him. The same should be on earth, and all nations should return to worship him.

The fourth supplication: "give us this day or daily bead." We ask God to bestow on us everything necessary for our temporal and spiritual life.

The fifth supplication: "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Here we ask him Almighty to grant forgiveness for those who transgress against us in conformity to the Lord's teaching, "But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." (Matthew 6:15)

The sixth supplication: "and lead us not into temptation." Adversities are plentiful in this life, and we are exposed to them continuously. Thus, we beseech God to protect us from them. And if we are afflicted by an adversity, he will give us the strength and the fortitude to overcome it.

The seventh supplication: "but deliver us from the evil one." The evil one (devil) is the most vicious enemy of our spiritual life. He is like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8). He (the devil) was a murderer from the beginning. (John 8:42) We beseech God to protect us from his snares, for his artifices are many. Therefore, without power from our heavenly Father, we cannot resist him.

The conclusion: "for yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen." We end our prayer by professing that our heavenly Father has kingdom, power, and glory, and everything. And Satan, our enemy, cannot overcome us, as long as we are the children of this majestic Father. By saying "Amen," we confess everything that has been mentioned in this prayer.

SUMMARY

1. The Lord taught his disciples a perfect prayer which contains everything that man needs in this life. It is called the Lord's Prayer, because the Lord Jesus taught it to his disciples.
2. The Lord's Prayer is divided into an introduction and seven supplications.
3. In the introduction, we call God our "Father," because he created us and redeemed us by the precious blood of his Son, and because we are brothers of Christ.
4. By the first supplication, we hold as holy the name of God that we may sanctify our souls and minds, and ask that, like us, all nations may hallow his name.
5. By the second supplication, we seek God's kingdom, that he may grant us everything.
6. In the third supplication, we submit our will to the hand of God in order to dispose of our affairs according to his will, as our Lord Jesus Christ taught us.
7. In the fourth supplication, we ask God for spiritual bread for the nourishment of our bodies. Then we ask him for a material bread for our necessary needs in this life.
8. With the fifth supplication, we ask him forgiveness of sins, and we pledge to forgive those who transgressed against us.
9. In the sixth supplication, we ask Almighty God not to lead us into temptation but drive them away from us, and help us if we are afflicted by them.
10. In the seventh supplication, we ask him Almighty to deliver us from the evil one (devil), our vicious enemy.
11. In the conclusion, we profess that God is our great Father, and he has power over everything. He is able to protect us and grant us anything we ask him for. And by saying "Amen," we confess everything that this prayer contains.

Book Six:
The Commandments

Chapter 1: General Commandments

> "I meditate on your presets and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees: I will not neglect your word."
>
> (Psalm 119:15–16)

It s not enough that man should only maintain the truths of the faith and seek means for hope. He should also accompany his faith with good works by keeping God's commandments and by leading a virtuous life. The Apostle James said, "You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?" (James 2:20) Thus, the commandments are a must for man, because they are the delight for those who fear him. The Prophet David said, "Your decrees are the theme of my songs wherever I lodge. In the night I remember your name, O Lord, and I will keep your law." (Psalm 119:54–55)

The Ten Commandments were given by God to his servant Moses amidst lightning, thunder, and smoke. They are of two parts. One part contains four commandments concerning God and man's duty toward him. The other part contains six commandments concerning man's obligations toward himself and his neighbor

Summary

1. It is not enough for man to believe only, but he should do good works, because faith without works is dead.
2. The Commandments are obligatory for man that he may be accepted by God and the Church.
3. God's Commandments are ten. The first four concern the duties of man toward God. The remaining six concern the duties of man to himself and his neighbor.

Chapter 2: The First Part of God's Commandments

> "I will always obey your law, forever and ever. I will walk about in freedom for I have sought out your precepts.
>
> (Psalm 119:44–45)

1. "I am the Lord your God; you shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:2)

2. "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth below. You should not bow down to them or worship them." (Exodus 20:3) By these two commandments, God want us to know him only and not any other gods. He also commands us not to make for us images to worship, but should devote our worship to him alone. We should extend to him adoration proper with his divine majesty and everlasting eminence. We should avoid anything that may distract us from worshiping him.

God requires from us a pure and warm adoration, as St. Paul said, "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord." (Romans 12:11) He wants us to worship him alone, because he created us and he protects us in this life. Greater than all this, is that, "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all." (Romans 8:32) We commit a sin by turning against these two Commandments, by worshiping images and by indulging in godlessness, sorcery, simony (selling offices of priesthood for money), and everything materialistic which separates us from the love of the almighty God.

3. "You shall not use the name of your Lord in vain." In this commandment, God forbids us to use his holy name in vain. It is our duty to honor him and hallow him by our tongues, and not denigrate him by using false oaths. The Lord Jesus forbade absolutely swearing, saying, "But I tell you, do not swear at all: either by

heaven, for it is God's throne; or by earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your 'Yes be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one." (Matthew 5:34–38)

It is permissible to swear in the name of God in order to tell the truth, but not always. We may do this under specific times and circumstances, when necessary, or in the case of important matters in which the truth cannot be established except by an oath. But this should only be done by the verdict of the civil or religious judge. In fact, the Holy Scriptures permitted the oath when necessary. The Prophet (Psalmist) said about the good person that, "He that swears to his own hurt, and change not." (Psalm 15:4)

We should not mention the name of God in matters of swearing, frivolity, or jest. Likewise, we should not swear by holy objects. "But I tell you, do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your 'Yes be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one." (Matthew 5:34–38)

4. "Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy." This Commandment orders us to keep the Lord's Day with true worship, leaving aside common worldly chores. It instructs us to contemplate the greatness of God and spend time reading the Holy Scriptures. The most important thing a Christian should do in the Lord's Day is to attend the Holy Liturgy, and listen to the word of God and to the homily.

Sabbath was a special day for the Jews alone. God said, "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you.... Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day." (Deuteronomy 5:12–15.) Since the Sabbath is specifically for the Jews alone, it was also a sign between them and God. The Lord said, "You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so may know that I am the Lord who makes you holy." (Exodus 31:13–17). The Lord also says in the prophecy

of Ezekiel, "Also I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the Lord made them holy." (Ezekiel 20:12)

These sayings clearly affirm that the Sabbath is a sign between God and the children of Israel only. But the sign between him the Almighty and us, we the children of grace, is the blood of the lamb, and his holy name is sealed on our foreheads. (Revelation 7:3; 14:1; and 22:4) In addition, the Lord Jesus broke the Sabbath clearly, as the Apostle John said, "For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God." (John 5:18)

The Apostle Paul forbade absolutely observing the Sabbath. He said in his letter to the Galatians, "You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you." (Galatians 4:10). He also abolished the Sabbath clearly saying, "Therefore do not anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebrated or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, in found in Christ." (Colossians 2:16–17)

From the beginning, the Christian Church observed Sunday as the Lord's Day. It is in this very day the Lord Jesus rose victoriously from the dead and bestowed on us all goodness and blessing. Therefore, we should observe this day as holy, because the Resurrection of the Lord is the greatest testimony of the veracity of Christianity. St. Paul said, "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith." (1 Corinthians 15:14)

The Apostles themselves hallowed Sunday, as they held their meetings in it. Indeed, most of their holy meetings were held on the first day of the week. (Acts 20:7). The Apostle Paul commanded that the believers should meet on the first day of the week. He said, "On the first day of every week, each one of you [the Corinthians], should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collection will have to be made." (1 Corinthians 16:2)

The Pharisees of modern time (those who observe the Sabbath), may object that the Apostles observed the Sabbath in the synagogues of the Jews. (See Acts 13:14 and 42–44; 19:13, and 18:4) But they have forgotten that the Apostles met on the Sabbath day in order to preach because the Jews usually met only on this

day. This does not, however, mean that the Apostles met on the Sabbath because they had religious consideration for it.

In the early generations, the Christians observed Sunday. St. Ignatius the Fiery One said, "Keep the Lord's day in which our life began." Justin Martyr said, "We gather on Sunday because it is the day in which God changed darkness into light, and non-existence into existence, and created the universe. Also on this day, our Savior Jesus Christ rose from the dead."

SUMMARY

1. The first part of the Commandments are concerned with man's duties toward God. They are four, as follows.
2. The first two Commandments urge man to worship God, and no one else, and forbid us to associate another god with him.
3. The third Commandment forbids us to use the name of God in vain, or swear by him. It enjoins upon us not to use God's name frivolously or take it lightly. However, it is permissible to use and oath in the name of God under certain circumstance.
4. The Fourth Commandment decrees that we should observe the Lord's Day. In the Old Testament, the Sabbath was observed as a reminder of the liberation f the children of Israel from bondage (in Egypt). The Christian Church, however, observed Sunday, because on this day the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, and granted us life and salvation by his resurrection.

Chapter 3: The Second Part of the Commandments

> "Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart."
>
> (Psalm 119:1–2)

The second part of the Commandments consists of six commandments. They concern the duties of man to himself and to his neighbor. He who observes these commandments is actually walking in the true path of the Lord, and will receive twofold of God's blessings. The Psalmist (David) said, "Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart." (Psalm 119:1–2) Let us study these Commandments.

5. "Honor your father and mother." In this Commandment, God enjoins upon us to respect, love, and obey our parents. Also, we should take care of them when sick, old, or in need. If we do this, we will receive blessing from the Lord, because he said, "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you." (Exodus 20:12) The Apostle Paul commands us saying, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." (Ephesians 6:1)

6. "You shall not murder." In this commandment, God forbids us to commit the crime of murder. By committing this sin, man destroys what has been created by God, and annihilates a soul of his neighbor, which is given him by God. It is a great transgression against God and man: against God because it destroyed his beautiful creation, and against the neighbor because it destroys life. Therefore, it is not permissible for man to take away his own life, because the soul is a gift of God to man, and he commanded him to preserve it.

7. "You shall not commit adultery." God forbade us in this commandment to pollute our pure body which he had given us. In fact, he commanded u to keep it clean. He also commands us to abstain from violating the precepts of the holy legal marriage and every sin which violates chastity.

The Apostle Paul said, "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but who sins sexually sins against his own body. You are not your own; you were bough at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." (1 Corinthians 6:18–19)

The things which man should avoid most in order to not fall into sin is the devil's deception, lustful thoughts, idleness, gluttony, evil companionship, foul speech, attending theaters, watching debauched movies, reading forbidden immoral books, incontinent dancing, and the like. The most specific consequences of these matter, save doing harm to health, is blindness of the mind, shunning piety and virtue, hardness of heart, loss of faith, and perhaps persistence in evil until death.

The most important thing man should do to keep himself from these sins is to control his senses and shun impurity. He should observe continence of eating and drinking. He should pray and worship God, read the Holy Scriptures, engage in spiritual contemplation, read the chronicles of saints, and follow the example of men of piety.

8. "You shall not steal." God prohibits us in this commandment to steal anything, whatever the means may be. Stealing generates, and even leads to, many other abominations, such as greed, pillage, injustice, fraud, bribe, usury, denying workers their wages, keeping and using the stolen things, refusal to settle debts, and illegal profits. He who deliberately breaks this commandment should repay his neighbor what he has extorted from him as much as possible, and compensate him for the harm he had done him.

9. "You shall not give false witness." This commandment forbids us to tell falsehood, such as taking the name of God in vain, using him as witness in false matters, and doing harm to our neighbor. It also commands us to shun lies, slander, evil thoughts, and manipulating judgments. He who commits this sin should compensate his neighbor and testify his wrongdoing before the people, in the presence of whom he fabricated lies against.

10. "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." In this commandment, God forbids us to covet whatever belongs to our neighbor. He also forbids us to entertain any evil desire, greed, and over sin against virtue.

These are then God's commandments. The Lord Jesus comprised them into two. He said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:37–40)

SUMMARY

1. The second part of God's commandments consists of six commandments. They concern man's responsibility to God and to his neighbor.
2. The fifth commandment orders the respect of parents and preserving their rights throughout life.
3. The sixth commandment forbids murder; it is a sin against God and neighbor. It is against God, because it destroys the beautiful form he created; it is against the neighbor, because it deprives him of life which God has given him.
4. The seventh commandment forbids man to defile his body by animalistic lust, and commands him to maintain purity and chastity.
5. The eighth commandment forbids stealing—that is, the pilfering of people's possessions by illegal means.
6. The ninth commandment forbids false testimony—that is, telling lies or using God's name as a witness in false matters.
7. The tenth commandment forbids coveting of anything that belongs to the neighbor. It also forbids envy.
8. The Lord Jesus restricted these commandments into two: the love of God and the love of neighbor.

Chapter 4: The Law of the New Testament

""The time is coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I make a covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,' declares the Lord. 'This is the covenant I will make with house of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.'"

(Jeremiah 31:31–33)

By the law of the New Testament, we mean the sublime divine commandments given unto us by our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the holiest and greatest law mankind has ever known until this day. This is the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah saying, ""The time is coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I make a covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,' declares the Lord. 'This is the covenant I will make with house of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.'" (Jeremiah 31:31–33)

The law of the New Testament is distinguished from other laws by being absolutely spiritual. As to external forms, the Lord was not concerned with them but denoted their causes. In this law, he intended only with the designs of the human heart and soul, and the rest is nothing but banalities.

The Lord Jesus sees the tree of evil planted in the soil of the human heart. Not only did he want to pluck out its leaves or cut off its branches, but also to uproot it completely, lest it will grow anew in the heart, which he wishes to be pure. For example, not only he did he forbid murder but also hatred, which is a potent cause of murder.

Before he delivered the Law of the New Testament, the Lord Jesus alerted his hearers to the fact that he has not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. He said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." (Matthew 5:17) After commanding them to adhere to righteousness, he said, "For I tell you unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of God." (Matthew 5:20) Having said this, he began to preach the eminent Law of the New Testament.

The Lord opened his divine mouth and blessed those who are worthy of the grace of the New Covenant. He said blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, he hungry, the thirsty for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peace makers and the persecuted, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. These are the sublime qualities of which Jesus, glory to him, wants to plant their tree in the human heart. Then he made a marvelous comparison between the teaching of the Old Testament and that of the New Testament. He made clear that the Old Testament intended only to cut off the branches of the tree of evil. His divine teaching, however, intended to uproot this tree. These intentions encompass the sublimity and sanctity of the principles of his teaching. This comparison runs as follows:

1. Appeasement. The Lord commanded his disciples to be conciliatory, and not be angry against each other, because anger leads to evil consequences, primarily murder. He said, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell." (Matthew 5:21–22.) The Lord knew that anger is the source of murder. Thus, if you do not become angry against your brother, you would not kill him.

2. Forgiveness. "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Matthew 5:38–39)

3. Love of enemies. This is the most sublime virtue mankind learned from heaven. The Lord said, "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate you enemy.' But I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may sons of your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:43–44)

4. Virtues should be acted in secret. The Lord Jesus did not like public demonstration of good deeds, because such demonstration renders these deeds and virtues worthless. The man who is praised by people has already received his reward in this life. Indeed, the Lord wanted these acts to be done in secret before God alone. The Lord said, "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven." (Matthew 6:1)

Concerning prayer he said, "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." (Matthew 6:6)

About fasting, the Lord said, "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth; they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." (Matthew 6:16–18)

There are many other things the Lord forbade in his Sermon (on the Mount), like storing up treasure on earth (Matthew 6:19), love of money (Mathew 6:24), and judging others (Matthew 7:1–6). After finishing his divine words, the Lord likened those who do them to a wise man, and those who shun them to a foolish man. How marvelous is this resembling. (Matthew 7:24-27)

SUMMARY

1. The Law of the New Testament was given by the Lord to his disciples; it is the most sublime teaching mankind ever known.

2. This Law is distinguished by the fact that the Lord Jesus wants to uproot evil by destroying its roots.
3. The most important part of this law is the blessedness the Lord wanted for his followers. He made a marvelous comparison between his own teaching and that of the Old Testament. He urged men to be peaceful, to love their enemies, and to adhere to virtues which should be done in secret. This is the spirit Jesus planted in the earth.
4. The Lord forbade other things, such as storing treasures on earth, love of money, and judging others.
5. The Lord likened those who keep his words to a wise man, and those who neglect them to a foolish man.

Book Seven:
Virtues and Vices

Chapter 1: Virtue

> "Add to your faith goodness; and to goodness knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."
>
> (2 Peter 1:5–8)

Virtue is a holy possession. It is firmly established in the soul of man to make his darkness a shining light. The term *virtue* encompasses many good deeds which every Christian should adorn himself with, as the Apostle Peter said, "Add to your faith goodness; and to goodness knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love." (2 Peter 1:5–8)

Virtue is either godly or moral. The godly virtue emanates from God, and God himself becomes its core. Through it, man attaches himself to God. These virtues are three: faith, hope, and love.

The moral virtues generate from the general human wellbeing. They become the guide of man and his final goal. They are numerous. The most important of them are those mentioned by St. Peter in his second letter. They are humility, chastity, understanding, obedience, justice, temperedness, patience, abstinence, truthfulness, generosity, activity, strength, courage, and firmness.

Virtues are generally necessary for the person in order to become a true Christian. The Lord commands all Christians with these words: "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

The godly virtues, however, cannot be acquired by natural deeds alone, because they surpass nature, and their source is God alone. God alone can bestow them on man, together with the justifying grace, as the Apostle Paul said, "Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God." 2 Corinthians 3:5 These virtues are not poured out on man until he has received the grace of justification by means of the sacrament of Baptism. The Apostle Paul said, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." Romans 5:1–2

SUMMARY

1. Virtue is a holy and sublime possession. It is firmly established in man's soul to make him holy.
2. Virtues are either godly or moral.
3. The godly virtues emanate from God, and with their objectives, they return to him. They surpass the bonds of nature. They are three in number: faith, hope, and love.
4. The source of moral virtues is the general wellbeing of man. They are numerous.
5. In general, virtues are necessary for man in order to become a good Christian.
6. Godly virtues cannot be acquired by natural deeds alone, but by God's providence, because they surpass the bonds of nature. God alone is their source, and he alone bestows them on man.

Chapter 2: The Godly Virtues

> "And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love."
>
> (1 Corinthians 13:13)

We said that godly virtues are three and the greatest of them is love, as said by St. Paul. "And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love."

(1 Corinthians 13:13)

1. Faith is defined by St. Paul saying, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1) It is a virtue which surpasses the bonds of nature. Through it, God assists us to believe of what he revealed by his messengers and his Church, not only based on the light of the natural reason, but also on divine revelation. Thus, there could be no contradiction between reason and faith, even though faith is higher than reason, because God, who reveals the mysteries and grants faith, is the same God who gives the human soul the light of reason. Therefore, reason and faith emanate from the same source, which is God. Consequently, there could be no difference between the two.

The Christian should confess his faith explicitly. If he does not, his refusal to do so could be interpreted as an implicit denial of faith, a contempt of the Christian religion, an insult to God, or the creation of doubts for the neighbor. Therefore, faith should be made manifest by words and deed, and by suffering death if necessary

2. Hope is a virtue which extends beyond the bonds of nature. Through it, we anticipate eternal life, which God promised to his saints, based on the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, and on the righteousness of God and his power. "We wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus

Christ." (Titus 2:13) Our hope is manifested by patience and by suffering calamities, by insults and by persecution for the cause of the promises of our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, we should rejoice in our suffering (Romans 5:3), because "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22)

We lose hope when we wallow in sins. It is then that the door of hope is shut before us, and we become controlled by despair and consequently lose faith. Despair is actually losing confidence in receiving eternal bliss. A Christian should not at all despair of the mercy of God, but should always hope for this mercy, as the Apostle Paul said, "For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness." (Romans 8:24–26)

3. Love is the highest and last step of the ladder of godly virtues. St. Paul preferred it to faith and hope. He said, "And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:13) Love surpasses the bonds of nature. Through it alone, a person knows whether he is the disciple of Christ. The Lord said, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:35)

Love is of two kinds: the love of God and the love of neighbor. We love God for his own sake, and we prove it by our good deeds and by keeping his commandments. We love our neighbor for God's sake and prove this love by our good treatment of our neighbor. We should abstain from anything that may do harm to him, or denigrate him, or become a stumbling block for him. In loving God and neighbor, the Lord Jesus epitomized all laws and prophets. He said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with your entire mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:37–40)

SUMMARY

1. Godly virtues are three: faith, hope and love.
2. Faith is what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1) It is based on the belief of the holy

Church. It should be in agreement with reason, because faith and reason emanate from one source, which is God.

3. A Christian must profess his faith by words and deeds, even if this costs him his life.
4. Hope is a virtue which surpasses nature. Through it we anticipate eternal life, based on the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the mercy and righteousness of God.
5. Love is a virtue which surpasses nature. It is greater than the former virtues, as St. Paul attests. It is of two kinds: love of God and love of neighbor.
6. By our deeds, we prove our love of God. And we prove love of our neighbor by shunning anything that may do him harm and debase his dignity. These two commandments are, in fact, the epitome of the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

Chapter 3: Moral Virtues

> "Better is childlessness with virtue; for immortal is its memory: because both by God are acknowledged, and by men."
>
> (Wisdom 4:1)

Moral virtues are uncharacteristic (qualities) which adorn man' soul. Man can acquire them from nature. However, only God helps him to acquire them. Then, man will manifest them before people as a living example of a true Christian. Solomon the Sage said, "Better is childlessness with virtue; for immortal is its memory: because both by God are acknowledged, and by men." (Wisdom 4:1)

Moral virtues are numerous. Ten of them are most important. They are as follows:

1. Humility is when man considers himself the least of all men. He lives in peace with his neighbor and carries his burdens. "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled; and who ever humbles himself will be exalted." (Matthew 23:12)

2. Chastity is that man should disdain his physical lusts and adhere to purity. "Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires." (2 Peter 1:4)

3. Understanding is that man should dispose of his affairs with wisdom and smartness. He should do good and shun evil, because "Understanding is a fountain of life to those who have it." (Proverbs 16:22)

4. Contentment is to be satisfied with the livelihood that God has bestowed on us, because "Godliness with contentment is great gain." (2 Timothy 6:6)

5. Obedience is the voluntary submission to the will of God and to the neighbor. The Apostle Peter said, "That now you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere

love for your brothers, love one another deeply from the heart." (1 Peter 1:22)

6. Justice is paying whatever due by us to God and neighbor in truth and fairness, because "Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice." (Proverbs 16:8)

7. Kindness is to treat people gently. St. Paul said, "Remind the people...to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show humility toward all men." (Titus 3:2)

8. Patience is to bear suffering with contented heart. "In your patience possess your soul." (Luke 21:19)

9. Abstinence is to be attached to the life to come and shun this world's desires. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal." (Mathew 6:19–21)

10. Firmness is to stand firm in conducting a virtuous life. "Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them." (1 John 3:24)

Chapter 4: Sin

> "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."
>
> (Romans 5:12)

Sin is the transgression of God's law with full will, knowledge, and freedom. Sin is either committed by word, deed, or thought. It stands in opposition to God, to neighbor, and even to us.

Sin is either original or voluntary. The original sin is the one we inherited from our father Adam, and death came to all men, as the Apostle Paul said, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned." (Romans 5:12)

The voluntary sin is the one we commit, as adults, by our will, knowledge, and freedom. It is of two kinds: mortal and venial. The Apostle John said, "All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death." (1 John 5:17)

The mortal sin is which man commits against the law of God with full knowledge and freedom, while at the same time feels the burden of the sin. It is called mortal, because it deprives the soul its exclusive natural life and lures it away from its ultimate goal. It also destroys the core of salvation and eternal life which man has received through redemption. Thus, the soul becomes liable to eternal death until it restores its salvation by true repentance and grace.

The venial sin is committed by man against the law of God with full knowledge and freedom, but not in grave matters. In this case, the sinner feels that he has not transgressed an authentic (spiritual) obligation. Such sin does not cause the soul to lose (divine) grace, and would not destroy its desire to be restored to its original state. However, if venial sin is not treated by penitence, it will become a mortal sin.

There is also a persistent and continuous sin called "blaspheming against the Holy Spirit." This sin will never be forgiven. The Lord said, "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or the age to come." (Matthew 21:32).

Most important of these sins is despair of salvation, persistence in evil, refusing to repent until death. These are called the "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit," because they urge man to despise the grace attributed specifically to the Holy Spirit.

The major sins are pride, miserliness, debauchery, envy, gluttony, anger, and indolence. They are considered major sins because they are the source of other sins and vices.

SUMMARY

1. Sin is the transgression of adults of God's law with full will, knowledge and freedom. It is either against God, against the neighbor, or even against us.
2. Sin is two kinds: mortal and venial. Mortal sin degrades the soul of divine grace, and leads man to eternal death without repentance and God's grace. The venial sin leads man to the mortal sin but could restore him by repentance.
3. Sin is either original or personal, which is committed by man himself. The original sin is that which was committed by Adam and inherited by his posterity. The accidental sin is that which man commits personally.
4. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is to continue to commit sin, despair of salvation, and refuse to repent until death.
5. Major sins are seven: pride, miserliness, debauchery, envy, gluttony, anger, and indolence.

Chapter 5: The Consequence of Man

> "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment."
>
> (Hebrews 9:27)

The consequence of man is his destiny after this life. This destiny leads to four important things: death, resurrection, judgment, and eternal reward.

1. Death is the separation of the soul from the body. The body goes to the dust until the day of resurrection, while the soul remains alive. The Sage (Solomon) said, "And the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:7)

After it separates from the body, the soul is either righteous or sinful. If it is righteous, it will go to Paradise to enjoy temporary happiness and rest. It feels (knows) what it will receive of the eternal glory in heaven. If it is sinful, it will be mentally tormented by what it will receive of eternal suffering in hell.

2. Resurrection is the return of the soul to the decomposed body and unite with it, and it will be raised by the power of God, and appear before the great judged. The resurrection is affirmed by the Holy Scriptures. It is confirmed by the Lord and his deeds, and by the teaching and the blood of his disciples.

3. Judgment is the trial of people before the throne of the Lord Jesus Christ in his second coming for what they did, whether good or bad. Judgment is one kind and general. It will only happen at the end of the world, as we are told by the Holy Gospel. As to that hour [of his coming and the end of the world], it is unknown, because the Lord did not want to make it clear to his disciples. "Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know what day your Lord will come." (Matthew 24:42) As to how this dreadful judg-

ment will be done, the Lord made this clear in the Gospel of Mathew 25:31.

4. Eternal reward is that everyone will receive his lot in the afterlife. The righteous will go to everlasting bliss, and the wicked to everlasting perdition. (Matthew 25:46)

We human beings cannot imagine the everlasting bliss. All that we can visualize is to see the beauty of Christ and enjoy what God has promised those who love him as The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:9.

Everlasting perdition is also unclear to us. However, the Holy Bible tells us of severe torments which human nature cannot endure. In one instance, it is exemplified by a fiery furnace (Matthew 13:50), and in another by the gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 25:30)

SUMMARY

1. Four are the consequences of man: death, resurrection, judgment, and eternal reward.
2. Death is the separation of the soul from the body. The body will return to the dust and the soul to its creator.
3. After death, the souls of the righteous will go directly to Paradise, where they will enjoy temporary bliss, while the souls of the wicked will feel mental torment (awaiting judgment).
4. Resurrection is the return of the soul to the body and appearing before the judge (Christ).
5. Judgment is the appearance before the throne of Christ, the just judge, and everyone will receive his reward.
6. Everlasting reward is that everyone will receive his worth in the afterlife. The righteous will receive everlasting bliss and the wicked everlasting perdition.

About the Translator

Matti Moosa, a native of Mosul, Iraq, and an American citizen since 1965, holds a Law degree from Baghdad Law School, Iraq, a United Nations Diploma of Merit from the University of Wales in Swansea, and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Middle Eastern history and culture from Columbia University in New York City. He is a writer, historian, university professor, and public speaker. He is also a full deacon in the Syrian Orthodox Church since 1976. He has penned several books and translations on the history and culture of the Middle East and on the Syrian Orthodox Church.

In this book, Matti Moosa provides an introduction and a translation of Rev. Bulus Behnam's work Al-Banafsaja al-Dhakiyya fi Khulasat al-Ta'alim al-Masihiyya li al-'A'ilat wa al-Madaris al-Orthodoxiyya (The Fragrant Violet: Concise Christian Teachings for the Use of the Orthodox Families and Schools), originally published in Mosul in 1946. The book, published while Behnam (later Metropolitan of Iraq) was Principal of St Ephraim's Seminary in Mosul, was intended to meet the needs of Syrian Orthodox families and schools for instructions on their Christian faith and its principles as held by their Church. It contains a wealth of knowledge of the basic principles of the Christian faith based on the Holy Scriptures, showing that the Syrian Church considers the Holy Bible its sole authority for salvation. Traditions are accepted and revered by this Church, which uses them as an illustration of the faith. Indeed, reading this small volume, one must conclude that Jesus Christ alone is the central object of the Bible, and that there is no salvation without him. In brief, the book contains the major institutes of the Christian faith held by the Syrian Church.

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